1993

The learning development centre

Kim Draisma

University of Wollongong

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The learning development centre

Abstract
The Learning Development Centre is an academic unit designed to provide support to both staff and students in learning related matters. We focus on the need for many students to make epistemological shifts: to change their approaches to learning and knowledge, if they are to achieve success in a tertiary learning environment. Students are taught to make shifts in learning, and therefore in thinking, from the descriptive to the evaluative, from a subjective understanding of knowledge to a critical understanding of knowledge as it exists in relation to other knowledge. They are taught to shift from thinking and learning in terms of pieces of atomistic knowledge to thinking and learning as elements of holistic knowledge in the context of a discipline. This shift provides the basis for the development of our teaching strategies.
The Learning Development Centre by Kim Draisma

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Staff of the Learning Development Centre and their specialties

Kim Draisma  Head - literacy, language, academic writing, research skills
Peter Bodycott  Literacy, language, writing, ESL
Royce Levi  Co-ordinator Gateway program, literacy, academic writing, research skills, ESL
Anne Porter  Maths, statistics, computing, research skills
Elizabeth Sandeman-Gay  Intensive ESL
Lindy Darling  Administrative Assistant
Ms Draisma, Mr Bodycott and Mr Levi provide assistance in literacy, language, academic writing (essays, tutorial papers, theses), and research skills. The main thrust of teaching is directed to individual and small group consultation where students are afforded the opportunity to ask questions and to clarify thoughts. Explanations of why changes need to be made lead to long term changes in student approaches to essay writing. As well as individual consultations with students, lectures, seminars and tutorials on specific topics related to academic writing, studying etc. are provided within course offerings on invitation from academic staff.

We do not offer hocus nostrums - we believe that there are no general solutions or foolproof strategies for academic success. Emphasis is placed on the importance of students retaining ownership and responsibility for their own work. Stress is placed on the importance of analytical discourse as related to specific learning tasks.


Ms Porter occupies the Centre's new Maths/Statistics/Computing lectureship. In this position Ms. Porter focuses on the diagnosis and remediation of student difficulties rather than the primary delivery of content via traditional lecture settings, and therefore workshops and individual tuition are the primary modes of teaching. Exceptions to this may apply where Departments specifically contract services for subjects or bridging programs.

The emphasis in the Mathematics brief is on generic Mathematics and on strengthening students' skills in Year 11 and Year 12 Mathematics. This is of particular importance for some student groups such as non-matriculating mature-age students, and students in courses that have subjects requiring an understanding of mathematics concepts.

The emphasis in the Computing brief is the provision of assistance to students struggling with the simultaneous introduction of technology and discipline-specific content. Targeted students are those, for example, who enter courses requiring a knowledge of computer technology or programming but are disadvantaged by having little or no prior knowledge of these areas.

The Statistics brief is primarily oriented to students who have difficulties grappling with statistical concepts or terminology. Workshops and short courses in using statistical packages and techniques are also provided for all students and staff in conjunction with the Statistical Consulting Service, Department of Applied Statistics. These courses will be advertised periodically.

The Centre sees students from all Faculties and disciplines, at all academic levels from pre-entry (Gateway) to PhD. We view learning as an ongoing process which is subject to various changes and interactions. The changes from: HSC to a university environment, 300 level to Honours, or under graduate to post-graduate study may involve a range of varied learning demands and writing outputs. Ideally our support can best be offered in a joint sharing of these demands.

The Learning Development Centre is situated on the ground floor of the Library building. Students require appointments for individual tuition and are asked to call in or phone 213977. Academic staff are also welcome to refer students to the Centre or to seek input into changing learning cultures.

Kim Draisma is Director of the Learning Development Centre. In conjunction with the Centre for Staff Development she has conducted workshops for academic staff on Student Learning and Working with International Students.