The Academic Skills and Learning Centre (ASLC) is part of the Division of Student Services (DSS) led by Registrar Dr Laura-Anne Bull. The ASLC contributes to the development of ANU's ‘inspired students’ by:

- teaching students how to take control of their learning;
- contributing to an effective learning environment; and
- maintaining a high standard of pedagogical practice and professional expertise.

To this end, the ASLC provides professional, student-centred, developmental academic skills and learning assistance consistent with the ANU’s mission to encourage in students the discovery of new understandings in their fields of interest. We contribute to the development of excellence in research and education through individual tutorials, courses and workshops delivered directly into the ANU Colleges and centrally, and by contributing to the development of policy in relation to academic language and learning.

This role is an important one given the university’s emphasis on transition, success and retention, and how these combine to create the ANU student experience. We aim to assist students to realise their potential while studying at the ANU, and become drivers of their learning discovery.

**ASLC Staff**

- **Director**
  Stephen Milnes, M.A. (Flinders), Ph.D. (UBC)

- **Senior Learning Adviser**
  Sage Leslie-McCarthy, Ph.D. (GU)

- **Learning Advisers**
  - Jack Bowers, Ph.D. (UNSW) (on secondment to Military Studies College)
  - Hamish Dalley, Ph.D. (ANU)
  - Thuy Do, Ph.D. (ANU) (returned from maternity leave in June)
  - Lacy Pejcinovic, Ph.D. (ANU) (on maternity leave from May)
  - Paul Preston, B.A (Hons) (ANU) (on secondment to SET)
  - Jodi Tutty, B.Sc Hons (USyd), M.Ed (CDU)

- **Casual Learning Advisers**
  - Jessica Hinchy Ph.D (ANU) (part-time)
  - Beverley Loke Ph.D (ANU) (part-time)
  - Vanisha Mishra-Vakaoti (Ph.D submitted, ANU) (part-time)
  - Vivien Silvey Ph.D (ANU) (part-time)

- **Maths/Stats Adviser**
  Brendan Van Rooyen (part-time until July)

- **Administrator**
  Stephanie Fadini

- **Admin Assistant**
  Andrea Mullens (part-time)
Staff changes

Stephen Milnes, Director of the ASLC, was seconded to the position of Deputy Registrar Student Experience part-time in 2013. In December this appointment was made permanent and Sage Leslie-McCarthy assumed the position re-titled Manager, ASLC.

In November, Stephanie Fadini retired as Administrator after 18 years with the ASLC (and 46 years in various roles at the ANU). It is anticipated that a new Administrator will be appointed early in 2014.

Paul Preston, on secondment to the newly created Student Experience and Transition (SET) team since 2012, assumed the permanent role of Manager, SET in July. Hamish Dalley subsequently became a permanent member of staff, filling the vacated position. Jack Bowers, on secondment to the Military Studies College since 2012, resigned to take up a position there. A new Learning Adviser has been appointed to take his position and will commence in January 2014.

Each of our Casual Learning Advisers, employed to cover maternity leave and secondments, submitted their PhDs in 2013. Jessica, Beverley and Vanisha are now pursuing their careers overseas, and Vivien Silvey accepted a contingent-funded contract to work full-time at the ASLC from November.

Due to a lack of demand, the position of casual Maths/Stats adviser ceased in July.

Individual tutorials

Individual tutorials are a core aspect ASLC work contributing to student retention, development and success. Tutorials are held with students from all levels, undergraduate to higher degree research, and across all disciplines.

In 2013, the number of students seeking tutorials and the total number of tutorials remained slightly down on previous years (Table 1). The decline is partially a result of the ongoing reduction in, and the eventual cancellation of, the Maths and Statistics tutorials service (Table 2). Another factor is our proactive approach in a number of courses identified in previous years as high-use (for example the CASS Visual Arts Honours program) where we ran dedicated group sessions and writing retreats as a more efficient way of assisting students from these cohorts. Additionally, in 2013 the ASLC had two staff on maternity leave and another two on secondment, one for part of the year and another for the whole year. Although we were able to fill some of this gap with casual learning advisers, there was a reduction in the overall number of tutorial spaces available to students. With the return of both staff from maternity leave by mid-February 2014, and the appointment of a new Learning Adviser starting in January to replace a staff member who has moved permanently into the seconded position, the number of available tutorial spaces should increase in 2014.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Tutorials 2010-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. Tutorials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Type of tutorials 2010-2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths &amp; Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As in previous years, tutorials were held with students from all levels and all ANU Colleges (Table 3). A majority of students came from CASS (37%), followed by CAP (16%), CMBE (14%), and CBE (13%).

Table 3: Students by level and College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>UG</th>
<th>HONS</th>
<th>GCW</th>
<th>MRES</th>
<th>PHD</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBE</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CECS</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoL</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMBE</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>439</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>826</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of these students, 45% had 1 tutorial, 34% had 2-3 tutorials, 15% had 4-7 tutorials, and 6% had more than 8 tutorials over the course of the year. The ASLC aims to work developmentally with students, teaching them transferrable skills and providing them with the tools to take control of their own learning. That 79% of students had 1-3 tutorials suggests that tutorials assist them to develop the skills they need to work autonomously. At the start of 2013, we added reporting feature to indicate the top 20 tutorial users allowing the 6% student group to be monitored, so that the reasons behind their heavy-use can be identified and addressed by Learning Advisers through the tutorial process.

Evaluation of individual tutorials

First year student survey

In July, the 108 first year students who had attended a 1-1 tutorial in Semester 1 were sent a survey to provide feedback on their experience of the individual tutorial. 27 students replied, representing a 25% response rate. The majority of the respondents were from CASS (57.7%). 76% of the respondents had attended between 1 and 4 individual tutorials that semester, and 72% indicated that writing related issues were the reason they booked a tutorial. Students were able to select more than one issue, and other significant issues included referencing (32%), research (16%), and exams (16%). The majority of students learnt about the ASLC through Orientation week events (60%) or via an ANU website (44%) (again students could select more than one answer). Other ASLC services used by students were the Essay Writing Strategies workshop (70%), the Essay Writing booklet (60%) and other StudySmart workshops (45%).

Students agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- The individual tutorial provided a positive environment in which to discuss my learning and/or work (88%).
- The individual tutorial provided constructive advice about how to improve my learning and/or writing skills (80%).
- The individual tutorial provided practical strategies that I felt I could begin to apply (80%).
• The strategies suggested by the learning adviser could be used in other contexts (68%).
• The individual tutorial is an effective form of teaching (84%).

In relation to open questions regarding what they got out of the individual tutorial, student responses included:

- Helped organise my thoughts and provided an incentive to get work done on time
- I’ve learned how to make my argument clearer
- The assistance with my assignment helped me get a good understanding of the way to approach, construct and answer university level assignments
- The tutorial was a great positive influence and reassured me I was on the right track

Peer review for professional development

In Semester 2, ASLC learning advisers participated in a peer review process to assist with their professional development in relation to this type of teaching. Colleagues worked in pairs to discuss what they would most like feedback on, and after seeking student permission to sit in on a 1-1 tutorial, each observed the other’s teaching. Following this, both parties undertook a process of written reflection in regard to the questions discussed prior to the observation, and what was observed. These reflections were shared and discussed forming the basis for further reflection. This process was undertaken at least twice by each learning adviser. Once the cycle was completed, the whole team met to discuss their responses to the process, which were overwhelmingly positive. Learning advisers discussed the ways in which the peer review process reinvigorated their teaching practice, gave them new ideas and different ways of doing things, and helped to build collegiality within the team. It was decided that this peer review cycle become a regular part of ASLC practice and from 2014 will occur at least once each semester.

Individual tutorials in 2014

Online booking system for individual tutorials

This year we developed and trialled in-house an online booking system for individual tutorials. This testing allowed us to refine the procedure, and in Semester 1 2014 students should be able to book individual tutorials themselves online through the ASLC website. The system will send out automatic reminder emails, and will allow students to cancel and reschedule appointments themselves. This initiative will allow students 24/7 access, giving them flexibility as to when they make appointments, rather than being bound by the 9-5 Mon-Fri regime, and encourage them to further take control of their own learning. By including the creation of a student profile in the process of creating an appointment, we will also minimise data entry errors and collect complete information about the student.

Group Teaching 2013

ASLC learning advisers provided 220 lectures, presentations, workshops, and short courses. Such provision is broadly categorised as ASLC-based (35%), ANU College-specific (48%), or institution-wide (17%). Overall, 6013 students attended these presentations (Table 1).

Not included in the ASLC-based teaching is the 5-week Introductory Academic Program that, running twice in the year, accounts for 80 workshops attended by 86 students.
Table 1: ASLC teaching and student attendance in 2011-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASLC-based teaching</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>2853</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3021</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>2310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANU College-based teaching</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>2522</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2885</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution-based teaching</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2379</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2223</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>7754</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>8129</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>6013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with previous years, ASLC begins teaching at the start of the year, with its Introductory Academic Program starting in the second week of January. In February, ASLC did a significant amount of teaching into O Week, including 26 workshops, focusing on students' transition into academic culture, which was followed in March by a series of College-specific workshops (Figure 1).

![Teaching 2013](image)

Figure 1: Teaching sessions by month

Teaching: ASLC-based

2013 saw a reduction in the number of ASLC-based teaching sessions run during the semester for three reasons. First, in first semester, ASLC had three staff on leave, which meant that College-specific teaching was prioritised. As a consequence, Graduate Skills UpGrade, which in 2012 involved 24 workshops on such topics as Time Management, Seminar Presentations, and Writing an Introduction, only ran 3 workshops. Second, ASLC discontinued its generic workshops for Honours students, focusing instead on being involved with College-specific orientation programs and academic skill development workshops. Third, at the request of Research Skills and Training (RST), ASLC suspended its HDR workshops, including its HDR writing groups, while RST transformed the Academic and Professional Skills Program into a series of Master Classes for both HDR students and early career researchers.

However, putting that aside, StudySmart, ASLC’s flagship suite of workshops run during Orientation, and Essay Writing Strategies accounted for the largest number of workshops (54), attracting 1605 attendees. On average, each workshop was attended by 29 students.
Research Essay Writing for Graduate Coursework Students ran 16 times, attracting 381 attendees, with an average of 23 students attending each workshop. During the mid-semester non-teaching breaks, ASLC ran REW twice, thanks to CBE Infrastructure making available the use of its tutorial rooms, with 91 students attending.

Twice a year ASLC provides a five-week Introductory Academic Program (IAP) for AusAID graduate coursework and HDR scholars, comprising familiarisation with academic expectations, academic writing and research, critical thinking, information literacy, and oral presentations. The timetable is intense, with students expected to produce academic assignments, participate in seminar/tutorial contexts, and engage with the Wattle online learning environment. Convened by Jodi Tutty, the IAP is a critical factor in the preparation of scholars for their academic programs, and for identifying students ‘at risk’. Evaluations of the IAP continue to indicate extremely high levels of student satisfaction. This year, Jodi mentored Thuy Do into the role of IAP convener, and we expect her to deliver an outstanding program in 2014.

Table 2: Student attendance at ASLC-based teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COURSE/NUMBER/YEAR</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Academic Program</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG StudySmart</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>1088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG Essay Writing Strategies</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>757</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG Advanced Essay Writing</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG Special Issues Series</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UG Statistics Workshops (new in 2011)</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HONS Workshops</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCW Research Essay Writing</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCW Graduate Skills UpGrade</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDR Writing Groups (new in 2011)</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>na</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching: ANU College-specific

Teaching into the ANU Colleges, across disciplines and levels of study, ASLC learning advisers provided 105 lectures, presentations or workshops on various topics, the majority of them being in CASS (Figure 2). There were 2786 attendees.

Of note are two teaching sessions requested by HDR students from National Centre for Indigenous Studies and Research School of Astronomy and Astrophysics.
ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences (47 sessions, 1405 attendees)

UG (14: 875): Managing your reading (ANIP), Essay Writing Panel (ENGL, ANTH)

H (25: 394): Honours induction, Exegesis Writing Retreat (ARTV), Developing Argument (ANTH)

GCW (2: 19): Writing with Academic Integrity (LING), Writing a Research Essay (ARTV)

HDR (6: 117): Induction, Writing about Practice, Preparing Abstracts for Conferences

Just a short message to thank you both for your work in putting together a fabulous essay writing lecture for POLS1005. Lacy, it was great to have you, and to have someone with an IR background. This week’s essay writing workshops in tutorials have so far demonstrated that students are really taking on some of your points, and the interactive format was great.

ANU College of Asia and the Pacific (16 sessions, 313 attendees)

UG (2: 30): Analysing Journal Articles, Essay Writing Q&A (STST)

H (4: 45): Orientation to Honours Research, Chapter Writing, Thesis Writing Retreat

GCW (5: 144): The Process of Argumentation (INTR), Writing with Academic Integrity (ASIA)

HDR (2: 37): Work Life Balance and Managing Wellbeing, Writing Abstracts

Tutor (1: 31): Induction

Consultancy (2: 26): Ministry of Islamic Education, Indonesia

I write these emails each year but I really do mean it. Thank you so much for your talk last night, it was really helpful and clarified for students the expectations in essay writing and acknowledging the work of others. It was great you were able to spend the time dealing with the questions and the comments too and I appreciate your participation. We have had problems with academic integrity and I can only hope that providing a skilling up session each semester and encouraging them to do the ASLC course and to seek ASLC help with their drafts (as well as help from me and the tutor) will resolve the issue.
ANU College of Business and Economics (10 sessions, 176 attendees)

UG (1: 44): Writing with Academic Integrity (MGMT).

H (3: 33): Critically Reading the Literature, Thesis writing

GCW (2: 51): Literature Reviews, Essay Writing (BUSN)

HDR (3: 31): Time, Project and Information Management, Developing a Research Proposal

Tutor (1: 17): Introduction to ASLC

Hamish was well prepared. He forwarded a copy of his set of presentation slides a week ahead of the lecture for feedback (no changes needed). He was also well prepared on the day e.g., arrived ahead of time to set up presentation; handouts ready to ‘roll’. The set of presentation slides were succinct and logical and on topic. His use of the actual BUSN7005 course assignment to convey his underlying message was pleasing and effective. His use of the handout to convey his message was also good – key extracts from a good standard of essay submitted by a BUSN7005 student in 2012. He ‘spoke to the slides’, which I consider to be important – rather than putting up slides as a kind of ‘prop’ and then addressing the audience without drawing upon the slides (divided attention) . . . He engaged the audience, in speaking with them in general (he was ‘on the front foot’, not intimidated by the audience) and through adopting a group discussion and question and answer type format.

ANU College of Engineering and Computer Science (11 sessions, 249 attendees)

UG (9: 203): Peer Reviewing and Writing (COMP), Teamwork Skills, Tutorial Support

Tutor (2: 43): Plagiarism, Cheating, and Academic Honesty

Thank you so much for the two sessions at the CECS Teaching Quality Practice sessions. Engineering and Com Sci are notoriously tricky to engage in sessions and you successfully conveyed the trickiness of the subject matter.

ANU College of Law (1 session, 12 attendees)

HDR: Literature Reviews and Thesis Writing (NCIS)

ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment (18 sessions, 591 attendees)

UG (6: 340): Developing an Argument (FSTY), Oral Presentations (BIOL), Essay Writing (ENVS)

H (2: 44): Thesis writing (BIOL)

GCW (9: 203): Orientation, Writing a Research Paper (Medical School), News & Views (BIOL)

HDR (1: 4): Thesis Writing (NCEPH)

I really appreciated the time you gave us in the course, particularly drawing out aspects of the essay question. It was evident from the tutorials later that day that the students really took on board the difference between an argument and the process of argumentation. I’d certainly like to have you speak to the students again next year.

ANU College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences (2 sessions, 40 attendees)

GCW (1: 15): Time and Project Management (BIOL)
Teaching: Institution-wide

At an institution-wide level, ASLC advisers taught 37 sessions into other Service Divisions and into the Residences, with 917 attendees.

The majority of the sessions were into Orientation and SIGN Mentoring programs organised by Division of Student Services, followed by sessions for Research Skills and Training, the Halls and Residences, ANU College, and for student organisations.

Teaching 2014: new developments and opportunities

New additions to the StudySmart suite of programs.

Since 2011, StudySmart has been the major teaching program for first year students. Held during Orientation Week and early in the semester, StudySmart aims to address incoming undergraduates’ transition needs, focusing on time management, reading strategies, and writing in the disciplines. Based on student feedback ASLC has developed three new workshops: Transitioning into University, Preparing for Tutorials, and Writing with Academic Integrity.

Building on level of engagement with HDR students at the College level.

At the start of 2013 the Academic and Professional Skills Program was disestablished and replaced with Master Classes organised by Research Skills and Training (RST). RST is reviewing its delivery and is going to focus on engaging with the Colleges and minimise its number of centralised workshops. ASLC will be meeting with RST in January to consider ways to work together. ASLC will also continue to maintain and build on its relationships with HDR conveners and College contacts.

Academic Skills and Learning Centre,
Lower Ground Floor, Pauline Griffin Building.
T: (02) 6125 2972
E: academicskills@anu.edu.au

http://academicskills.anu.edu.au
www.anu.edu.au