Skills for Learning Policy

INDEX

POLICY

1. Introduction

Academic skills refers to the wide range of skills required from students in order for them to thrive in their university studies. Often referred to as 'soft' skills, they include areas such as finding academic research, referencing, academic writing and critical thinking.

At the University of Wolverhampton, academic skills are chiefly supported by the Skills for Learning (SfL) team. This is a centralised resource operating within Library Services.

The SfL team is well-regarded across the University, with faculty staff frequently incorporating their services into module teaching or referring students to their in-house support.

1.1 Aims and Purpose

The aims of this policy are to:
- Formalise the SfL team's support offer.
- Explain the working relationships between SfL and other University services.
- Provide best practice advice for academic staff wishing to utilise the SfL offer.
- Detail the feedback management process of the SfL team.

2. Scope

The SfL service operates within a blended learning model, offering a mixture of in-person and online support for students from all levels of study. The offer can be divided into three areas of support: 1-2-1, taught-time sessions, and online resources. For current details on our services, see [our webpage](#).

2.1 1-2-1 Appointments

Students can access our drop-in service throughout the working week with no booking required. This is a campus-based service held at City, Walsall and Telford.

Alternatively, students can request an online appointment by contacting the team at skills@wlv.ac.uk.

2.2 Teaching

The SfL team provides teaching support both in-house and as part of module taught-time hours.

Library workshops can be browsed and booked at our webpage. These are currently run online in response to student feedback.

The SfL team also delivers embedded curriculum teaching, which can involve any of the skills in our offer. To arrange support, teaching staff should contact their faculty Liaison Librarian, a member of the Skills team or the SfL contact address - skills@wlv.ac.uk.

2.3 Online Resources

For students who cannot access our live support, there are a range of online resources provided by the SfL team.

All students are automatically enrolled on the SfL Canvas course, which includes information, short videos and activities on the academic skills covered in our offer.

In particular, students should note the Panopto section of this course, which includes video tutorials on a range of topics. Staff who wish to embed these videos into their teaching are encouraged to request the required code from skills@wlv.ac.uk.

Finally, a collection of study guides can be found at our webpage; these have all been made accessible to a range of students. The SfL team provides teaching support both in-house and as part of module taught-time hours.

The SfL team is always open to recommendations for new skills in our offer. However, as standard we teach in the following areas:

- Finding research and search strategies
- Academic writing
- Referencing
- Critical thinking
- Writing literature reviews and dissertations
- Reflective writing
- Digital skills (esp. Microsoft Office).

The team must consider academic integrity when supporting students. Therefore, we reserve the right to refuse support where we feel a student is relying heavily on SfL input. For more details on this, please see our Appointment Guidance Policy.

3. Referrals Process

It is increasingly important that teams across the university connect with each other for the benefit of student experience. Therefore we are building more formalised referral processes between teams.

All Level 3 and 4 students will be seen by an Academic Coach (AC). As part of the initial AC meeting, a diagnostic form will be completed which includes direct links to the SfL workshop bookings page.

Where an AC recommends that a student engage with the SfL service, follow-up will be made in the next semester. The Skills for Learning Manager will liaise with relevant ACs to discuss whether these students have booked a workshop or appointment; where this hasn't happened, the AC will discuss this with the student. The SfL Manager will also regularly liaises with Student Transition Teachers (STTs).

The SfL team understands that in some cases a student's particular learning needs will require more specialist support than we offer. In these cases, it will be recommended to students that they contact Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) and, where permission is given, the Skills Librarian will also contact SSW directly with the student's details.

4. Best Practice for Teaching Staff

Although the SfL team provides a range of in-house support, in order to maximise our impact within the University we recommend teaching staff 'embed' our workshops into their own modules. It is useful to have a short session at the beginning of a semester, with a follow-up once an assessment has been made of student ability.

Contact should be made either with faculty Liaison Librarians, the Skills mailbox (skills@wlv.ac.uk) or directly with the Skills for Learning Manager (Joe Carey, j.carey2@wlv.ac.uk).

Where planning allows, we would also recommend a short meeting with the Skills for Learning Manager to discuss where support is best positioned within the module. This meeting can take place before teaching begins for the term, and can be a collaborative process where experience from the Skills for Learning team (as well as the module tutor) can be utilised.

Where embedding support is not possible, SfL have a range of audio-visual materials which can be incorporated into Canvas modules. Staff should contact skills@wlv.ac.uk to organise this.

5. Feedback Processes

For academic skills support to be effective, it is crucial that the SfL team remains aware of current needs across the University. There are multiple ways in which feedback is gathered for developing the Skills offer.

SfL will have a representative at all key faculty meetings (in the form of either a Liaison Librarian or the SfL Manager). These meetings are an opportunity for staff to suggest new ways SfL can support students (eg: a new workshop, updates to online support).

As noted above, it is imperative that student needs are also addressed. Therefore the SfL team will continuously request feedback from students, incorporating relevant points into the support offer.

All students who have attended an in-house SfL workshop will be contacted up to one month after the session, with a request to complete a short feedback survey.

A designated member of the SfL team will regularly review feedback responses, providing regular reports on key trends or specific support requests. These reports will be shared with the SfL team and other colleagues roughly four times a year.

Where actions can be taken to develop the SfL offer in response to student feedback, this will be recorded in the team's 'Feedback Action Tracker'. This form will serve as a useful summary of the SfL response to student needs.

The SfL Manager will share this tracker at appropriate meetings, especially those involving the Students' Union or faculty staff.

The SfL Manager regularly liaises with other relevant staff in the university – especially Academic Coaches (ACs), who frequently contact students facing particular issues with their studies. Feedback from the ACs will be used in the development of SfL support.

6. Related Policies & University Frameworks

This statement should be read in conjunction with the following policies and guidance:
- Academic Skills Statement
- Education and Students Sub-Strategy
- Graduate Attributes Framework
- Inclusivity Framework
- SfL Appointment Guidance Policy

7. Information and resources

The SfL service will continue to respond to the needs of the wider university, for the benefit of our students and staff. It is hoped that the above policy document clarifies the place of this service within the wider network of academic support at Wolverhampton.

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