The Creation of a Strategic and Innovative Writing Programme in WBS

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1. Introduction

This report concerns the development of an Academic Writing Programme in the Warwick Business School.

The primary short term aim (2011/12-2012/13) is to provide a comprehensive service with a suite of products for all WBS students, including undergraduate, specialist masters, MBA/MPAs and PhDs.

Secondary aims mid-term are to develop services supporting academic publication by Faculty and also to develop a 'Writing Creatively' programme and services.

Like other Russell Group members, the University of Warwick has no University Writing Centre and so offers no formal academic writing training structure or comprehensive departmental provision of centralised technical support for essay, dissertation and other academic writing. Various Warwick providers and services exist and are used to varying degrees by WBS (see Section 2) and these provide the basis for the proposed suite of services.

With an Strategic Project grant (£7400) form the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning a task force[1] has been investigating, piloting and researching the writing requirements for academic literacy in order to scope and propose products and services for WBS students that address their writing needs for academic study.

Scoping the project has addressed important questions such as:

- What are the needs and levels of demands from students?
- Would a WBS service be purely or mainly for 'technical' business writing, or are more academic or 'creative' features imagined?
- Given the WBS strategy of differentiation and creativity, how can writing creatively, academically and professionally be united?
- How could such a service or centre be staffed, funded and resourced?

[1] Dr Nicholas Monk and Dr Barry Sheils, IATL; Dr Cathia Jenainati and Dr Rochelle Sibley, Warwick Academic Writing Programme; Dr Mihai Balanescu, Centre for Student Careers and Skills and Ms Susanna Dammann, Centre for Applied Linguistics. Additionally advice has been taken and support given from members of the Creative Writing programme in the Department of English and Comparative Literary Studies: Professor David Morley, George Ttoouli and others; and from Professor Richard Miller, Professor in the English Department at Rutgers University and Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Centre, an internationally recognised centre of best practice. Grier Palmer has led for WBS with help from Louise Gracia (*The Use of Poetry in Accountancy*), Emily Collins (Academic Office), Dr Susan Brock (Dean's Office) as well as from programme faculty and managers who have been consulted and have participated in activities.

2. Existing provision of academic writing support

At the present time, there are programmes and schemes of academic writing support accessible to WBS students, but access varies considerably depending on the student's choice of degree course or level of study. This section outlines the current providers of academic writing support and the different programmes that are available at the university.

2.1 Existing sources of academic writing support

Currently, there are three main sources of academic writing support available to students at WBS. The first is the centralised university provision organised via the Centre for Student Careers and Skills (CSC). The second is the customised programme offered by the Academic Writing Programme (AWP), which is delivered by Dr Rochelle Sibley. The third is the support provided by the Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL), which is focused on English language tuition. (See also App. 4)

2.1.1 Student Careers and Skills service

The Centre for Student Career and Skills (CSC) provides several programmes offering writing support for all levels of students at the university. These are run through the Student Academic Development section of the Centre for Student Careers and Skills service and offer workshops, online advice and guidance for undergraduates, taught Masters students, and research students. This provision is free of charge but is not subject-specific.

2.1.2 The Academic Writing Programme

The Academic Writing Programme (AWP) offers specialised, subject-specific academic writing support to undergraduates, postgraduates, research students and research staff across the university. They work with the partner departments to design customised teaching programmes for students that fit into the requirements of the degree. Their material takes the form of stand-alone lectures and workshops, or integrated modules that operate within the syllabus of the partner departments. They currently provide academic writing support for a variety of degree programmes at WBS, for which they charge the department directly. The material for these sessions is designed and written by Dr Cathia Jenainati and Dr Rochelle Sibley, the convenors of the programme.

2.1.3 The Centre for Applied Linguistics

The Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL) is focused on providing support for students and staff who wish to improve their English language skills and language competence. They offer pre-sessional and in-sessional English language support in the form of classes, as well as online material designed to

help students develop their English language skills independently. In addition to these open classes, CAL also offers dedicated language support to groups of students within departments in order to provide targeted language skills development within specific fields of study.

2.2 Existing provision for WBS undergraduates

There are several programmes offering writing support for undergraduate students at the university, both in terms of centralised general writing support and tailor-made sessions.

2.2.1 The Undergraduate Skills Programme

The Undergraduate Skills Programme is run by the Centre for Student Careers and Skills and offers a series of workshops which are open to all undergraduates at the University of Warwick. These 2-3 hour workshops include sessions on reading and note-taking, effective learning strategies and critical thinking, as well as separate workshops on academic writing for arts/social science students and science/engineering students. The first three topics are open to students from any discipline and offer general advice and strategies for developing learning styles. The two sessions that focus on academic writing divide the arts and social sciences students from the sciences and engineering students, and discuss the different forms of writing that each group may encounter. These workshops also cover academic style and issues associated with plagiarism.

Another aspect of the Undergraduate Skills Programme is the Recipes for Success series, which is a set of short, online guides to essay-writing, research skills and learning strategies. There are also Academic Skills Advice sessions, a combination of drop-in (with a published timetable) and appointments on request, in which undergraduates meet individually with a Study Skills Adviser to discuss their research or learning skills. In addition to time-management and effective note-taking, this service also offers advice on improving essay writing.

Finally, the Undergraduate Skills Programme has piloted a peer-to-peer support programme of Undergraduate Writing Mentors. These Mentors are two doctoral level students in disciplines related to academic writing who provide face-to-face advice on academic writing through bookable appointments. They are available to discuss issues such as planning and structuring assignments, presentation, narrative coherence and clarity of writing.

2.3 Existing provision for WBS postgraduates

There is a wide variety of different academic writing provision available to WBS postgraduates, ranging from the general advice offered through CSC to the bespoke sessions offered by the AWP.

2.3.1 The Masters Skills Programme (CSC)

The Masters Skills Programme is aimed at all taught Masters students at the university, offering short workshops that are tailored according to the following subject areas: Arts, Science, Social Science and Warwick Medical School. WBS taught Masters students are eligible to attend the Social Science workshops, which promote the development of study skills and research expertise. These sessions are informal and encourage the exchange of ideas between students about the writing process at Masters level. In addition to the workshops, the Masters Skills Programme also offers one-to-one Study Academic Skills Advice and Recipes for Success like those found on the Undergraduate Skills Programme.

2.3.2 The Research Student Skills Programme (CSC)

This programme caters for all research students at the university, including PhD, EngD, MPhil and Masters by Research students, as well as those studying for a Professional Doctorate. In addition to the workshops on personal development, collaborative working and enterprise, the Research Student Skills Programme offers a series of 23 workshops on academic writing. Each session is designed to be a stand-alone topic so that students can pick and choose which workshops they attend. The workshop subjects include understanding postgraduate academic writing, how to structure a piece of writing, developing critical analysis, and maintaining grammatical accuracy. Some of these sessions are open to all postgraduate students, whilst others are aimed at PhD students only.

2.3.3 Sessions provided by the Academic Writing Programme (AWP)

The AWP already provides stand-alone academic writing support sessions for several postgraduate degree programmes at WBS. These take the form of lectures and workshops delivered by Dr Rochelle Sibley on programmes such as the MBA for IBM, the Masters in Leadership and Public Management and the Warwick MPA. The AWP has also run two 3-hour doctoral day schools for WBS PhD students.

These sessions are all designed to be subject-specific, and were produced after discussions with staff from each degree programme. As such, they offer targeted advice to students about the assignments that they will be expected to complete, and emphasise the importance of effective writing and critical thinking.

2.4. Existing provision for WBS researchers

The AWP has experience of working with research staff to provide effective writing support in the specially designed Academic Writing Programme for Early Career Researchers, which was organised in collaboration with the Learning and Development Centre. This programme has taken the form of workshops, one-to-one feedback sessions and writing retreats to promote and share best writing practice. Several early career researchers from WBS have attended this programme during 2010/11. This form of writing support for research staff is not provided by any other service at the university.

3. The rationale for the initiatives and exploratory approach of the Academic Writing WBS project.

It became apparent from talking to programme administrators, module convenors and academic writing providers that there were only small pockets of sustained teaching of academic writing in WBS. These principally used the AWP, while CAL was a relatively low visibility service, and no data existed about possible individual student usage of the central CSC.

As far as programmes were concerned, formal use of the AWP writing services only occurred in the Taught Masters of IGPM and the WBS Doctoral programme. Several Faculty members run short sessions within their modules, especially in the Specialist Masters.

To open up the subject in the School we ran (in conjunction with IATL) a one-day WBS programme of activities concerned with Academic Writing, covering all four programmes (Undergraduate, Specialist Masters, MBAs and PhDs) and involving Faculty, programme staff and students (see App. 8).

Some initiatives had already been piloted or researched, and were reported back on and discussed (see section 4). Other sessions were either masterclasses (Professor Miller, Rutgers) or open discussions of work in progress (Dr Cathia Jenainati, AWP), aiming to bring out the needs of students, highlight important academic writing issues and gauge reactions to possible options.

It became clear that the principal gaps in academic writing support were in the Undergraduate programme and the MBA courses. Although WBS undergraduates may use CSC or CAL, no data exists on this usage, and no formal programme promotion or referencing by Faculty of this provision appears to take place. This is also the case with the MBAs.

Undergraduate initiatives therefore included three exploratory activities:

i) to test scale: can we lecture medium-sized classes (40-50) using CSC?
ii) can we start Academic Writing in the 1st year in collaboration with the Library's 'Student as Researcher' IATL project (which aims to develop Information literacy)?
iii) could we build on 3rd year critical thinking tutoring to help critical writing?

A common feature was that we wanted to explore linking or integrating these elements into modules, with the support of Faculty, so that the learning was WBS grounded and business subject-specific.

Therefore Activity 1 was initially linked to the core 2nd year module 'Global Integrative Project' prior to a challenging individual essay assignment carrying 60% module weight; the 'Information Literacy' project was developed to be integrated into the 1st year core module 'Markets, Marketing and Strategy'; and the critical writing tutorial was piloted in the 3rd year core module 'Critical Issues in Law and Management' (CILM), also before the major assignment occurred.

In the case of the MBAs, a lecture initiative was set up for the MBA for IBM induction, designed and delivered by AWP – an example of a bespoke design delivered in scale at the entry point into the academic world.

The details of these and other activities, and the student and faculty reactions follow in section 4.

Overall we were exploring how to create synergies through transfer of good practice *across* WBS and generate a critical mass/momentum for Academic Writing in WBS.

A SWOT analysis was drawn up by the project team comparing the three Warwick providers:

Strengths	Weaknesses/Question marks
Student Careers and Skills (CSC)	
Writing and study skills linked	Generic writing skills
Services for different student levels e.g PhDs.	Central, not in WBS courses / modules
Mix of service forms: workshops, 1:1 advice	Limited scale of resources
Free, from Dept contribution to Univ.	Wide range of topics, Writing one unit.
New online database 2011/12?	
Pilot of drop- in writing mentors @ L.Grid	
Academic Writing programme (AWP)	
Links to Warwick Writing programme	English Dept. based
Customises provision; new design capability	Limited scale of resources
Services for different student levels e.g. PhDs	Pay as you go
Mix of service forms: lectures, workshops	
Academic and Creative underpinning re Writing	
Royal Literary Fund Fellows	
Centre for Applied Linguistics (CAL)	
Writing in English as a foreign language	Linguistics based
Writing and study skills linked	?Awareness low; access not signposted
Pre -sessional and in-sessional	Pre-sessional fees £1220
Online service: EASE, etc. Links to materials	Limited in-sessional places
Links to online diagnostics and tests	
Academic underpinning re English learning	

4. Exploratory academic writing support initiatives

Two academic writing conferences were held in May 2011: 'What is Academic Writing?' organised by the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) and the WBS Writing Day. The first of these events explored the different modes of academic writing provision currently available at Warwick – from the AWP, CSC and the CAL – and introduced external and international perspectives from St. Mary's University College, Belfast and Rutgers University in the United States (see App. 7 for the conference programme). The second event took place in WBS, and was of a more practical nature, staging live masterclasses from Professor Richard E. Miller and providing forums for reflection on emerging topics: how do we integrate different models of academic writing across the university; how do we integrate academic writing in a subject-specific way within WBS; how do we provide academic writing provision for students at different levels of study?

In addition to these initiatives, other programmes of academic writing support are in development for the coming academic year.

4.1 Programme for 2011/12 for Arts and Social Science Undergraduates (CSC)

This programme will offer: a 6-hour course and 5-hour seminar (writing practice) series and an Academic Writing Open Forum, a one-hour open meeting where students are invited to submit questions, receive answers and debate on given topics of the day.

4.2 Integrated programmes for WBS Specialist Masters students (AWP)

In 2011/12, the Academic Writing Programme will be providing two new integrated programmes of support for Specialist Masters students. The first is for the MSc in Finance and the MSc in Finance and Economics, which will involve three terms of lectures, seminar workshops and one-to-one writing feedback for the entire cohorts of these two degrees. The second new programme is for the MSc in Accounting and Finance, which again will involve lectures, seminars and a writing clinic designed to complement the degree's modules and assignments. This programme will run in terms 1 and 3.

4.3 Writing Mentoring for Taught Masters Students (CSC)

The undergraduate writing mentoring programme will be enlarged to Masters Writing mentors, available to all taught masters students. One session a week will be held in Warwick Medical School and the other three in the Learning Grid.

4.4 Warwick Academic Writing Online Database (CSC)

During 2010/11, Dr Mihai Balanescu of the Centre for Student Careers and Skills and Dr Rochelle Sibley designed and developed an online system of academic writing support for all students at the University of Warwick. This database of information covers topics such as structuring essays, planning writing time, understanding assignments and revising work. It is mostly interactive, including practical exercises and links to best academic sites on writing online. It is a place for tutors and students to meet and provide information about writing requirements and grading criteria. It also includes a forum for debate open to all, a video library featuring tutors and students talking about academic writing. The database is due to go live for the Autumn Term 2011.

4.5 Academic Writing Sessions for the MBA for IBM and the DLMBA (AWP)

The first academic writing session for the MBA for IBM students was delivered by Dr Rochelle Sibley in May 2011, promoting writing structure, effective writing practice and critical thinking techniques. The very positive student feedback has led to a similar session being introduced into the Distance Learning MBA induction week in September 2011. This session also discusses effective writing practice, the requirements of the course assignments and strategies for engaging with writing tasks. A programme of further online support for both cohorts is currently under discussion.

4.6 Case Study Writing for PhD students (AWP)

As part of the WBS plan to promote academic writing support, Dr Rochelle Sibley of the Academic Writing Programme has designed a programme to teach WBS PhD students how to write up case studies for use in teaching undergraduate students. The module will incorporate workshops, seminars and individual presentations, finishing with each participant teaching their case study to an undergraduate class in a peer-observed seminar. The aim of the module is to make academic writing not only a priority for PhD students but also a means of career advancement, with their case studies being added to a central bank of teaching material to be used at WBS.

5. Discussion of the initiatives and findings

The review of existing provision for teaching academic writing and the results of the various initiatives in WBS, including work in progress, are now discussed**.** This will lead into the final section of the report, which presents the writing strategy and proposals for WBS.

Two major themes have emerged for discussion:

1. the challenges that a writing programme for WBS will face in terms of scale and scope, balanced by some identifiable common needs and also core best practices which can be disseminated across the full range of programmes and courses.
2. The organisational /operational issues and options, including links to service providers in the University.

5.1 Challenge: The School's needs are multiple and segmented, but there are common features

WBS has a multiplicity of programmes with different learning modes. For example, there are clear distinctions between the Undergraduate degrees and the Specialist Masters or MBAs. Provision will also have to be made for PhD students, while 'Faculty writing for publication' is a further project in the WBS writing initiative.

Additionally, within WBS programmes we can see that courses, or even modules, can have different writing needs depending on their pedagogic approach and assignments. While some courses demonstrate a bias towards reports or quantitative analyses, others favour discursive essays or reflective assignments. Another consideration is that the context of the individual student's writing may vary in terms of culture, support and experience. One example of this variation is the 'solo' in and out study of Distance Learning MBAs compared to the continuous class immersion of the Full Time MBAs.

However, despite the School's variety, this review has identified some generic writing needs of students in WBS:

i) Facilitated entry into the academic world – students with this need may be entering:

- From school into the university (a key influence will be how writing was taught at school, possibly with prescriptive *norms* which clash with the university's).
- From outside the UK, and therefore probably writing in English as an additional language (with wide variation in national cultural styles and differences in linguistic interpretation). This is a very significant consideration in WBS.
- From working in business (where their writing/communication style mostly likely emphasises bullet-pointed reports, plus Powerpoint and e-mails).

ii) **Managing sources** appropriately, which overlaps with developing research skills

The requirement is to be able to find material, then select and integrate it into one's text in order to support an argument. Importantly, the student must also provide satisfactory referencing of sources, thereby avoiding plagiarism.

iii) **Structuring** an argument

There is the need to develop an ability to design, build and communicate an engaging and coherent argument that maintains a line of discussion. This clearly links to critical thinking, but even having accomplished the reading and analysis parts of a task, the student still needs to write well to ensure successful academic assignments.

iv) **Identifying and understanding** the reader and the assignment question / task

A key competency for students is to be able to align their written work with the expectations and communication culture of academia in terms of approach, style, structure and vocabulary.

v) Writing **critically**

Students need to be able to match their writing to a critical approach by using an appropriate written style. This means they must be able to distinguish between and effectively choose a reflective or tentative approach, or between synthesis, description and paraphrasing.

vi) Additionally there is a **technical** need to know the correct punctuation, grammar and construction of English

We suggest that these needs can be linked to the concept of Academic Literacy, i.e. the understanding and skills needed to read, think and communicate academically in a university. This was a major thread in the recent Kings/Warwick Graduate Pledge project (KWP)[2].

Two foundation stones of this part of the KWP project were summarised as 'adopt[ing] a transformative rather than normative perspective towards student writing in the context of the university' (referencing Lillis & Scott, 2007 [3]), and 'embed[ding] student understanding and enhancement of literacy practices in the context of their programme of study'. This moves the subject of writing up from a technical skill to a higher level of competency, aiming to help students think and communicate appropriately for both a Russell Group University's expectations and for the students' disciplinary studies.

Perhaps we can also link the challenges of writing academically to the hurdle for students of overcoming the hidden challenge of 'threshold concepts' and 'troublesome knowledge', a theory of undergraduate learning difficulty developed in the pedagogic research of Mayer and Land:

[2] Report of the Academic Literacies working group, pp. 53-61 in *Creating a 21st Century Curriculum: The King's-Warwick Project (http://kingslearning.info/kwp/attachments/134_KWP-Creating_a_21st_Century_Curriculum_Final_Report.pdf.pdf accessed 29.8.2011)*

[3] Lillis, T. & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: Issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 4(1): 5-32.

On acquiring a threshold concept a student is able to transform their use of the ideas of a subject because they are now able to integrate them in their thinking.[4]

Similarly, the various writing initiatives undertaken this year showed strong evidence of break-though moments for students across programmes and stages of study, initiated by an introduction to and guidance about good practice in academic writing.

5.2 The organisational /operational issues and options, including links to service providers in the University.

i) In the School we have found **mixed levels** of provision, with a combination of different skills being targeted without a strategic pedagogic framework. Overall, despite the strategic educational need for better academic writing by WBS students, there is limited provision of writing tuition in the School (although some very encouraging initiatives are in progress). Additionally, there is weak visibility to students and staff of existing University writing services regarding what is available, where provision is located and how to access it.

ii) **Faculty** should be seen as key components of academic writing provision for students. Some currently provide advice via lectures or seminars within the modules they organise. Building on this, WBS could provide training to help more Faculty teach academic writing, including via the teaching development activities for WBS PhDs.

iii) **Feedback and formative assignments** are two areas where students request considerably more help and opportunities. As well as evaluating content and application skills in assignment feedback, the Faculty's good practice could be to always give some comments and advice on a student's academic writing. Similarly, NIEs could consider formative assignments as practice for students before essays and exams.

iv) **Signposting** by WBS Faculty, personal tutors and programme staff to remedial and support services available in the university seems sporadic, due principally to a lack either of awareness or specific knowledge of these systems of support. We are investigating how better to organise the communication and promotion of the services available.

v) A key pedagogic issue is **where** to place academic writing provision in the curriculum. Design options are i) outside modules as stand-alone sessions; ii) parallel to modules; iii) integrated within modules.

Currently all three are being utilised but there are underlying questions about which approach works best, especially when considering the disciplinary issue (see **vi**); and whether there are operational synergies and efficiencies we can achieve in the School's provision. Another consideration is **when** is best to offer academic writing support, both in terms of the student's study cycle at WBS and the proximity to assessment.

[4] Land, R., Cousin, G., Meyer, J.H.F. and Davies, P. (2005),Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge (3): implications for course design and evaluation, in C. Rust (ed.), *Improving Student Learning – equality and diversity*, Oxford: OCSLD.

vi) A central concern is to balance appropriately **generic skills against subject-grounded writing**, within the design of a course or module's customised instruction. This raises both pedagogic and also resource/cost issues. The School should aim for optimum use of central services and for efficiencies of scale, especially for large courses like the Accounting/Finance Undergraduate degree or the DLMBA.

vii) Little use so far is made of **online and self study materials.** This is potentially a very significant opportunity, given both the WBS platforms and expertise, and the central CSC developments noted earlier in the provision section.

viii) As well as developing and delivering customised teaching of academic writing, another operational issue is to provide **individual teaching**, either in small groups or in one-to-one sessions. All three providers do supply this level of service, but clearly WBS faces a resource and cost challenge if we were to increase this provision.

For further useful ideas and discussion, see the Academic Literacy sections in the reports from the Kings/Warwick Project[5] and from the Kings Academic literacy team[6]. For information about approaches to Academic Writing and best practice outside WBS and the University, see App. 3.

[5] Lygo-Baker , S. (2009). A review of existing practice at King's College London. King's-Warwick Project Draft Report. King's College London. Creating a 21st Century Curriculum: The King's-Warwick Project ; Mockridge, A., Morris, T., Njoroge, K., Simbuerger, E., Smith, S. & Wilding, D. (2009). *The Graduate Pledge: King's-Warwick Project*. Draft Report. University of Warwick.

[6] Lea, M. & Street, B. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, 23(2), 157-172; Wingate, U. & Dreiss, C. (2009). Developing students' academic literacy: An online approach. *Journal of Academic Language & Learning*, 3(1): 14-25.; and Wingate, U. & Winch, C. (2010). *A model for enhancing the academic writing and reasoning of King's undergraduate students.* College Teaching Fund (CTF) Final Project Report.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

The following list of recommended actions has been identified through the exploratory stages of the Academic Writing WBS Project and further investigation into best practice, both within the university and at other institutions. These recommended actions have been categorised according to degree programme and relate to three key themes: reflecting evidence from research and best practice; exploiting opportunities at WBS; and balancing a school-wide programme with customised provision of academic writing support.

6.2 Reflecting evidence and best practice

These recommendations are in direct response to student feedback on their needs and concerns regarding academic writing provision (see App. 4). They have also been informed by the high level of interest from Faculty and programme administration regarding future academic writing support for students across WBS. It is the intention of these recommendations to establish design principles for any future provision of academic writing at WBS. The findings of the Academic Writing WBS project have been complemented by additional research into best practice at the University of Warwick and at other institutions (see App. 3).

6.3 Exploiting opportunities at WBS

These recommendations reinforce and support existing programmes of study at WBS in a variety of ways. Firstly, academic writing provision can be tied into core modules rather than requiring students to attend extra lectures. It can also be linked to important assignments, which will result in higher engagement with the learning and lead to improved satisfaction scores. Faculty would also benefit from improved student understanding and skills.

Secondly, these recommendations should encourage Faculty to engage directly with academic writing provision, by accessing either existing initiatives or new services and resources.

Thirdly, these recommendations build upon current academic writing provision and encourage work in progress initiatives. This generates the potential for existing pilot schemes to be extended or adapted for other degree programmes. It also emphasises the importance of promoting to students other sources of academic writing support, such as CAL and CSC.

6.4 Balancing a school-wide programme with customised provision

These actions also generate visibility, critical mass and synergies regarding academic writing provision within WBS. By drawing attention to the importance of supporting students in their writing at all levels of study, these recommendations foster the integration of critical and creative work.

By providing course- or module-specific support, these recommendations promote a greater understanding of good writing, not just in an academic context but also as a transferable skill that students can use in their professional lives.

Additionally, these actions also allow for the development of new synergies across programmes, both within WBS and throughout the university as a whole. A school-wide focus on and provision of academic writing support will be of real benefit to WBS students, but could also create important models for future provision in other departments and centres across the institution.

Finally, these recommendations acknowledge the need to balance customised and subject-specific provision with acceptable levels of cost, including by creating synergies through shared activities and materials. By incorporating existing academic writing provision and combining tailored, small group sessions with large-scale lectures, this approach offers an efficient and economical programme of academic writing support.

6.5 Recommendations

Taking into account all of the above, the following recommendations are being made (* signifies a new initiative).

6.5.1 Undergraduate-level recommendations

1. Establish Information Literacy for Year 1 in *Markets, Marketing and Strategy* and *Understanding Organisational Behaviour*.*
2. Establish essay writing in *Global Integrated Project* for Year 2.*
3. Extend critical essay-writing in *Critical Issues in Management* and *Critical Issues in Law and Management* for Year 3.*
4. Support existing academic writing provision by Faculty in all years.
5. Promote CSC in all years via courses, personal tutors and SSLC.*
6. Promote CAL in all years via courses, personal tutors and SSLC.*

6.5.2 Specialist Masters-level recommendations

1. Support the new academic writing provision in MSc in Accounting and Finance, built into core module *Issues in Accounting* for Term 1.*
2. Support the new academic writing provision in MSc in Finance and MSc in Finance and Economics, built into *Research Methods and Dissertation* module throughout the entire academic year.*

3. Support the new academic writing induction session for the Masters in Public Leadership and Management.*
4. Support existing academic writing provision by Faculty on all courses.
5. Promote CSC via courses, personal tutors and SSLC.*
6. Promote CAL via courses, personal tutors and SSLC.*

6.5.3 MBA/MPA-level recommendations

1. Support the MBA for IBM academic writing induction sessions.
2. Support the induction and dissertation academic writing sessions for the MPA.
3. Transfer the MBA for IBM model of academic writing provision to other face-to-face MBAs, especially Full-time (also Global Energy and Executive MBAs).*
4. Support the Distance Learning MBA induction academic writing sessions.
5. Adapt the MBA for IBM model for online access by Distance Learning MBAs (and for anytime access by other MBAs).*
6. Support existing academic writing provision by Faculty in all courses.
7. Promote CSC via courses and SSLC.*
8. Promote CAL via courses and SSLC.*

6.5.4 PhD-level recommendations

1. Support the new *Case Study Writing* module for PhD students.*
2. Support existing academic writing provision by Faculty.
3. Promote CSC via supervisors and SSLC.*
4. Promote CAL via supervisors and SSLC.*

6.6 Questions to the Recommendations

Using a critical approach, we have identified the following five strategic questions about the Academic Writing WBS Project recommendations.

1. Are the resource demands and costs acceptable?

The recommendations emphasise the School exploiting the existing university service provision, which is currently under-utilised. The development costs for certain initiatives have already been financed, either by the IATL support or by the Teaching and Learning budget. The Specialist Masters programmes are financing their provision from within their existing operating budgets. Faculty who are currently teaching academic writing do so within their TAP allocation; they can gain free synergies from directing students to the additional provision hosted by CSC and CAL.

2. Should the School attempt a comprehensive programme or focus on selected elements of provision?

Research has shown that students in all programmes in the School have pressing needs and demands for increased and improved provision of academic writing support. Secondly, reflecting good practice in change management, a comprehensive approach makes this a School-wide priority

on everyone's agenda. Thirdly, a highly visible and energetic series of initiatives will strengthen the School's brand offer to prospective students and raise satisfaction scores for existing students.

3. Will Faculty accept and commit to these recommendations?

Yes they will because these recommendations will help the impact of their teaching and the academic performance of their students while reducing the need for remedial feedback. They can easily access practices, materials and support currently or soon to be available. The grounded nature of the recommendations allows Faculty to incorporate the provision into the specifics of their modules rather than having to accept a generic or unrelated approach. As personal tutors, Faculty will make increased use of the remedial support services of CAL and CSC, relieving student pressures on their time.

4. How do we measure the impact of the resource and time commitments?

It will be possible to measure impact quantitatively as evidence for the benefits of a tailored WBS writing programme using the following information:

- the number of students who access CSC training in academic writing
- the number of students who receive training in academic writing at WBS
- student satisfaction scores on Faculty writing feedback for assessments
- confidence of students in their own writing ability, pre- and post-training
- student satisfaction scores on the provision of academic writing tuition
- Faculty satisfaction [with writing provision, students' abilities in and attitudes towards writing, their own skills development in teaching writing]

5. How do these recommendations support the School's vision and overall strategy?

Firstly, this will create a competitive advantage for the School as other institutions tend to rely on generic central provision. Providing a high quality of writing support and teaching across the School will improve student satisfaction scores in the excellence of WBS teaching and learning. The efficiencies in synergies will release time from Faculty both as teachers and personal tutors. The innovative nature of the programme will also support the brand strategy of looking at things differently.

6.7 Foundation Principles for Academic Writing at WBS

Having assessed the experience of teaching academic writing at the University of Warwick, and having reviewed best practice at other institutions, we propose that all academic writing teaching at WBS should promote the following essential skills:

1. How to tailor your writing to the audience and task requirements.
2. How to structure an argument.
3. How to use and cite sources effectively in support of an argument.
4. How to incorporate critical analysis of materials and arguments into your writing.
5. How to select the appropriate style for a specific writing task.

These five principles should underpin all WBS academic writing provision, but the method of delivery and specific content will vary depending on degree programme and level of study. In addition to these principles, all students will be supported in the appropriate use of technical skills such as punctuation, grammar and sentence construction.

Appendix 1: Create and Professionalise: Writing for Business in a Modern University

Proposal for Strategic Project funding to the Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning, October 2011

This proposal concerns the development of an Academic Writing Program in the Warwick Business School. The University of Warwick is not alone in the Russell Group in offering no formal structure, in departments, for the provision of central technical support for essay, dissertation, and other academic writing – although it should be noted that Manchester, Nottingham, and Goldsmiths, for example, all have substantial university-wide programmes (6 or more fulltime tutors). The proposal seeks to begin to address this gap in Warwick's offering to students in the area of academic literacy by scoping a programme for 1 year of activity within the Business School that addresses the writing needs of Undergraduates, Masters students and PhDs. Funding for the programme will be used to buy out time for academics the Business School to work with IATL on the development of a workable plan for a Writing Centre, and consultation with those from already established writing centres. Scoping such a plan will address important questions such as: is the centre purely for 'technical' writing in business, or is something more 'creative' imagined? Are, indeed, these two impulses – to be 'creative' and to 'professionalise' – mutually exclusive, or can they be united? How would such a centre be staffed, funded, and otherwise resourced? What are the levels of demand from students?

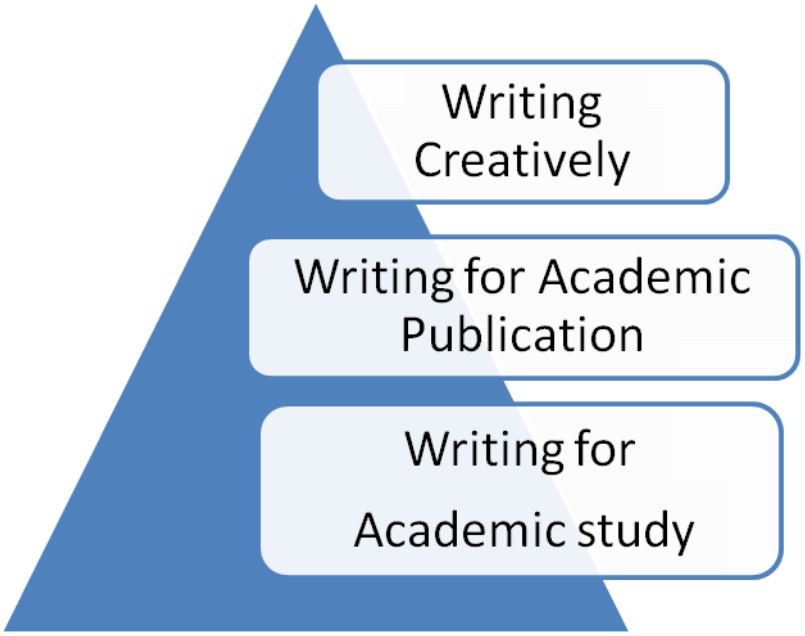
Naturally we would need to consult widely in this area and, given every major US university without exception has a mature writing programme, it would seem appropriate to invite academics from such an institution to visit Warwick to advise and consult. My recommendation would be the internationally recognised expert on academic writing Professor Richard Miller, who is Chair of the English Department at Rutgers University, and was instrumental in making their Plangere Writing Centre the force it is today. My other recommendation would be Professor Jay Ellis from the University of Colorado, Boulder, who is known for his innovative and creative approach to Business writing.

Dr Nicholas Monk would act as advisor to this project, drawing on his existing experience of Writing Programmes both in the US and the UK. Both Dr Cathia Jenainati from the English Department's Academic Writing programme, and Dr Mihai Balanescu from Careers and Skills should also be fully engaged with advising on this project if possible. Catherine Hanley and Caroline Gibson are both experts in writing for publication and their experience would be invaluable. Members of the Creative Writing programme such as David Morley, George Ttoouli will also advise. With this in mind there will be a specific element in the proposal that seeks to develop the use of poetry in Accountancy, a project already begun by Louise Gracia in the Business School.

The project's consultation phase would be as wide-ranging as possible and would involve the preparation of questionnaires for a variety of University staff and students and face-to-face interviews with relevant staff from the Business School in particular but also from other parts of the University. The surveys and research would be advertised as a paid project to interested parties at postgraduate student level and supervised by a member of IATL staff (Caroline Gibson has expressed

an interest). In its initial phase, as a process of scoping, few undergraduates would be reached, but should the proposal result in the creation of a writing centre the impact will involve thousands.

Appendix 2: The Writing Triangle



Writing Creatively

To use imagination and the creative senses to conceive and write engaging, insightful and colourful material

For lecture support e.g. handouts ;
Seminar material
Case studies
Communications generally e.g. general media; blogs
Individual writing – articles, papers, books, etc.

Writing for Academic publication

To achieve publication and/or presentation of research and knowledge through designing and writing an effective communication, using structure, appropriate style and language, with originality.

Writing for Academic study:

Introduce and train students in the academic literacy and culture of Warwick:

Undergraduates
Masters
MBAs
PhDs

Grier Palmer 7.2.2011

Appendix 3: Academic Writing Provision in a Sample of UK Business Schools

	Business School	Writing training provision for students (all levels)
1	Cranfield University School of Management	Taught courses which are part of the generic core skills training programme provided for all research students: http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/doctoral/development/page44207.html • Writing to Avoid Allegations of Plagiarism • Technical Writing Skills • Managing a Large Document in Word • Using Refworks and 'Getting Your Referencing Right First Time' Under continuing support: • Writing And Presenting Quality Conference Papers
2	University of Bath School of Management	'Essay Writing Skills' session led by student trainers under SORTED sessions open to all students. The link is found on the Student Union site. PGSkills: postgraduate skills training for research students: • Writing papers for publication - elearning module - online http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/pgskills/courses/modules/RP00224.htm • Writing your thesis (less painfully) for the social sciences - Workshop http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/pgskills/courses/modules/RP00067.htm • Reading for academic writing - for the social sciences - Workshop http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/pgskills/courses/modules/RP00064.htm • Writing: Critical writing - for the social sciences - - Workshop http://www.bath.ac.uk/research/pgskills/courses/modules/RP00059.htm

3	Lancaster University Management School	The School offers Research Training Seminars which are open to all PhD students. This includes the following seminars: • Managing Writing • How to get Your Book Published • Writing for Academic Journals in the Context of Career • How to write a thesis The university has an 'Effective Learning Programme' where sessions are designed for undergraduate students. • One of the courses is 'Essay Writing for Arts & Social Science'. • Another course called 'Effective Writing for International Students' is open to all LUMS international students.
4	Manchester Business School	Graduate Development Training workshops hosted by the EPS Graduate Development Programme: • Writing for Non-Academic Audiences • Writing Scientific Abstracts • Academic Writing • Writing Up Your Thesis The University Language Centre runs training workshops in writing for postgraduate students through the various Faculty training offices. These courses are charged (£75). http://www.langcent.manchester.ac.uk/english/academicsupport/postgraduate-training/ The University Language Centre offers international students a one-to-one tutorial service to support them in their written academic work. Home students may also be referred for an appointment if they are experiencing particular difficulties. This is a free service. http://www.langcent.manchester.ac.uk/english/academicsupport/tuto

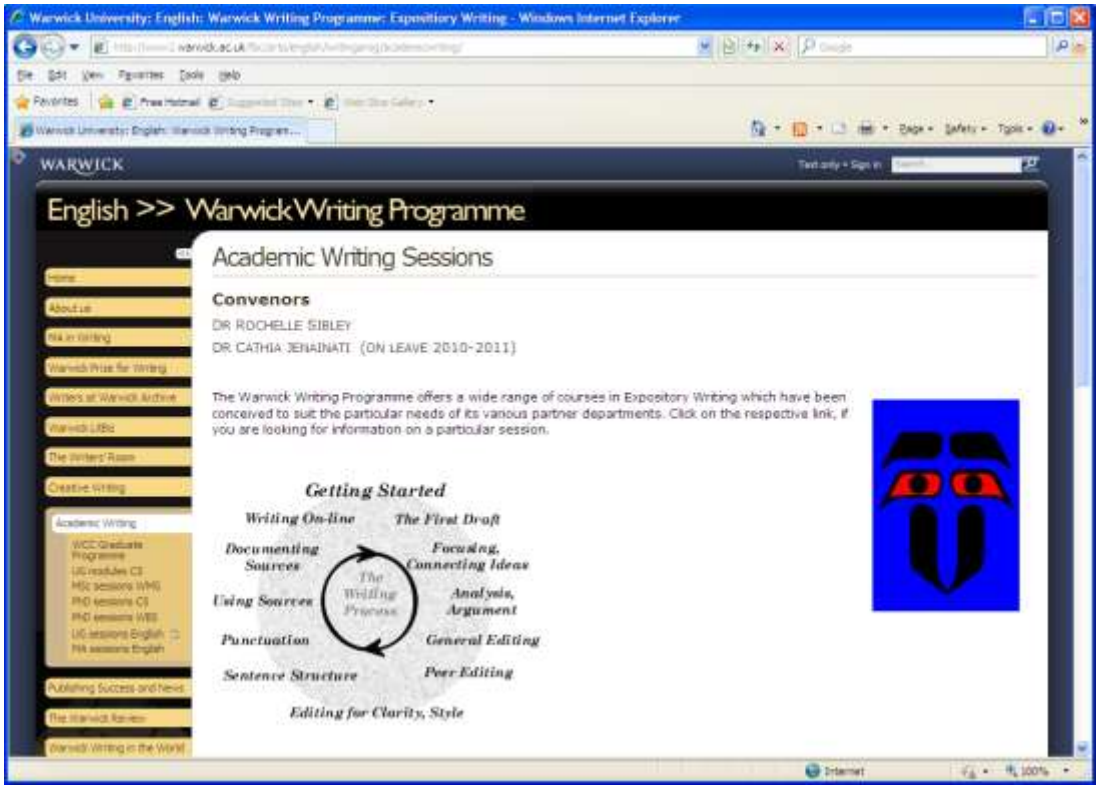
		rial-service/
5	CASS Business School	
6	Henley Business School University of Reading	Several workshops offered as part of the University's Student Services Directorate training programme (STEPS). Some examples: http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/studyadvice/Workshops/sta-workshops.aspx • Essay writing at university (for mature students) • Develop your essay writing • Writing academically: style, grammar and communication • Understanding referencing, avoiding plagiarism
7	Open University Business School	The University provides online resources and exercises to all students. Students have to sign in to access the exercises. http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/reading-and-writing.php The library also offers some online training sessions via the web-conferencing tool Elluminate Live! They have also made available a number of samples from many Open University and Business School courses free to download from iTunes U. The Creative Writing album is one of the top downloads. http://open.edu/itunes/
5	Aston Business School	The University provides one-to-one study skills tutorials including tutorials in • Academic writing • Critical reading and thinking skills • Note-making • Planning, drafting and editing assignments • Referencing and avoiding plagiarism

		• Strategies for improving proofreading skills The learning and Development Centre runs a number of workshops, delivered by experienced study skills tutors. These sessions includes Planning and writing essays & reports. They also have 'The Write Now!' writing mentor scheme which is a three year project funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching & Learning (CETL). The mentors are 'peers or graduates who work with students to develop their academic writing skills. http://www1.aston.ac.uk/current-students/academic-support/ldc/writingmentors/
9	Judge Business School University of Cambridge	The University as well as the Business School provides several development courses for the PhD students. This includes One-to-one writing development sessions with a writing specialist - up to four sessions per term.
10	Nottingham University Business School	The graduate school offers different specific types of writing courses such as writing for fellowship application; literature review and research proposal. http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/graduateschool/traininganddevelopment/onlinecourses/index.aspx| Courses offered by Centre for English Language Education, School of Education. 1. presessional students - Academic Writing 2. insessional students - argumentative writing, report writing 3. Graduate students - writing thesis, referencing, avoiding plagiarism http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/cele/prospective/presessional-

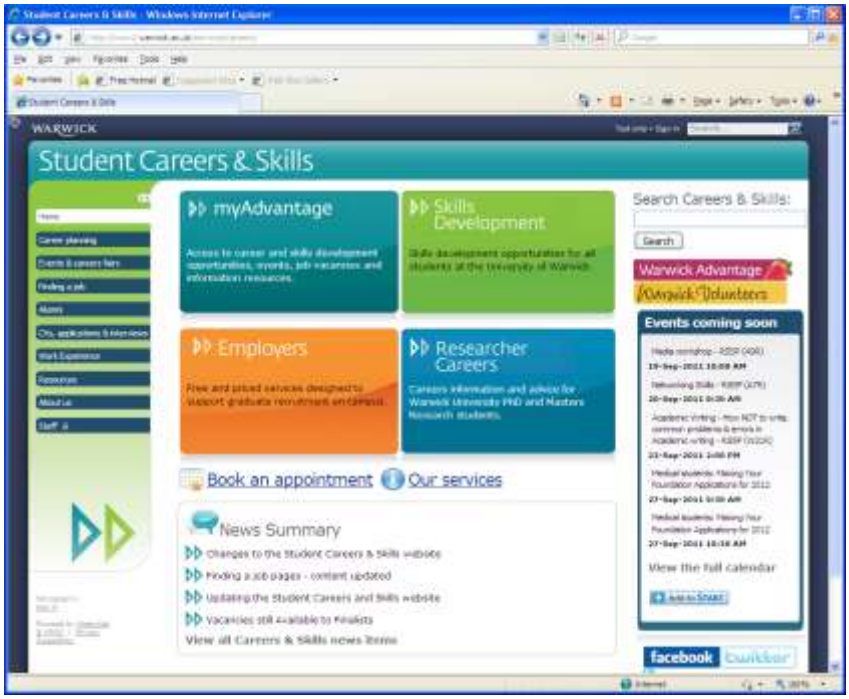
		english/index.aspx
11	Business School University of Hertfordshire	The school's Academic Skills Unit helps the students with cope with studies and they have a very good database of guidelines for students: on writing; which includes instructional terms for exams and assignments; planning for written assignments; essay writing; essay writing tips; essay and report writing tutorial; reflective writing; report writing; placement portfolio report; academic writing style; signposting and checking your own work. They also offer several courses (1 to 2 hours session) over the semesters that students can sign up for.

Appendix 4: University Provision for Academic Writing

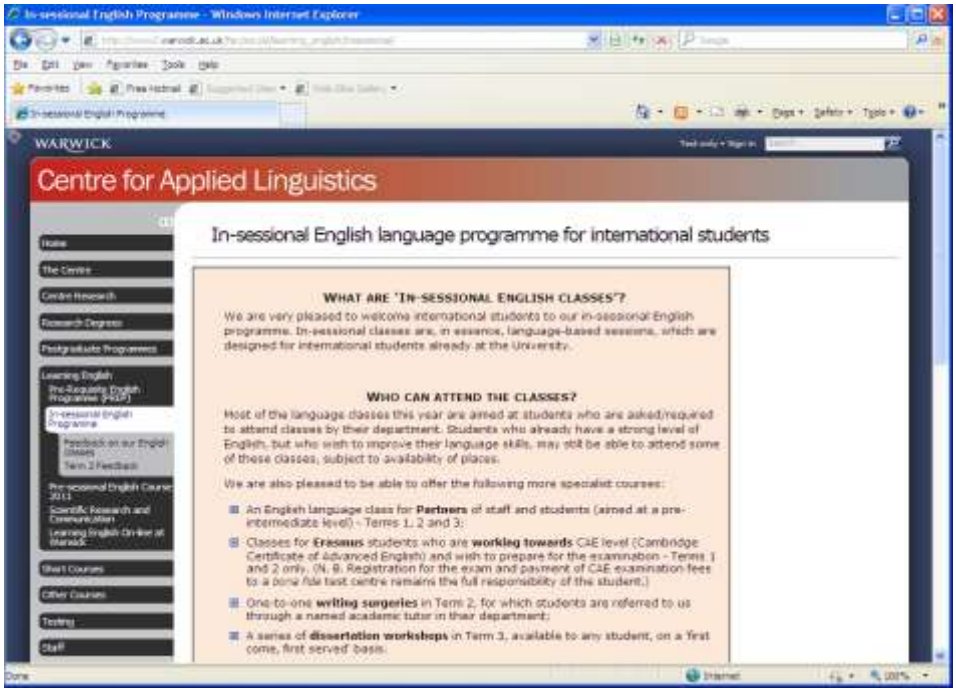
1. **Warwick Academic Writing Programme**
   http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/writingprog/academicwriting



2. **Centre for Student Careers and Skills**
   http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers



3. **Centre for Applied Linguistics**
   http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/al/learning_english/insessional/



Appendix 5: Research Report by Dr Barry Sheils

Introduction

This research was designed to gauge the demand of Warwick Business School students and staff for a new writing centre and to consult on the potential character of its programme. Our findings combine quantitative and qualitative data collected from student and staff questionnaires, focus groups and interviews with academic writing experts. In total we received 351 completed student questionnaires. Broken down into the different levels of study this works out as follows: BA/BSC 176; MBA 106; MA/MSC 46; PhD 19 Other 4. Of these 351 students:

95% agreed that a writing programme would enhance WBS skills provision

78% would commit to such a programme voluntarily

69% agreed or strongly agreed that such a programme would fulfil a demand that is not currently being met across the university

Of 351 student respondents 234 responded to a generic questionnaire which asked about forms of writing provision in WBS. The remainder were responding to a more tailored survey which combined general questions about writing provision with more specific questions concerning one of three prototype writing series. These were: 'An Introduction to Academic Writing' by Dr. Mihai Balanescu from the Student Careers and Skills Centre; 'Writing Masterclasses' by Professor Richard E. Miller a visitor from Rutgers University; and a series of postgraduate workshops, ('Writing Case Studies' and 'MBA for IBM: Effective Writing'), by Dr. Rochelle Sibley from the Academic Writing Programme.

These workshops took place in the context of two academic writing conferences, 'What is Academic Writing?', organised by the Institute of Advanced Teaching and Learning, and the WBS Writing Day. The first of these events explored the different modes of academic writing provision currently available at Warwick – the Academic Writing Programme, Student Careers and Skills and the Centre for Applied Linguistics- and introduced external and international perspectives from St. Mary's University College, Belfast and Rutgers University in the United States (see Appendix 7 for the conference programme). The second event took place in WBS, and was of a more practical nature, staging live masterclasses from Professor Richard E. Miller and providing forums for reflection on emerging topics: how do we integrate different models of academic writing across the university; how do we integrate academic writing in a subject-specific way within WBS; how do we provide academic writing provision for students at different levels of study? (see Appendix 8 for the full conference programme).

We shall begin in Section 1 by documenting the generic student responses, before detailing the student reaction to the prototype writing sessions in Section 2. In Section 3 we shall highlight certain persistent themes and concerns which emerged from the student testimonials. Section 4 shall present some of the WBS staff attitudes towards the institution of an academic writing programme.

Section 1: General Attitudes

The following statistics describe the attitudes of 234 WBS students toward the prospect of increased academic writing provision. It is clear from their responses that there is a genuine need for a greater academic writing support, with 161 students saying that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that a new writing programme would address a need for support that is not currently being met at WBS. These figures also show that students across WBS view writing style a very important skill for their professional development (181 "agree or "strongly agree" with this viewpoint) but most felt that WBS assumed students already have adequate ability in academic writing (176 "agree" or "strongly agree" with this). Importantly, students themselves are clear that good writing skills also aid creative thinking (177 "agree" or "strongly agree" with this). A huge majority (219 out of 234) view additional academic writing sessions as beneficial to their study at WBS while many would commit to an academic writing programme voluntarily (182 out of 234). Interestingly, the results show resistance to making such a programme compulsory (166 out of 234), so the delivery of future provision will need careful consideration.

1. In the context of your current study in WBS, please signal whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. 5 is 'strongly agree', 1 is 'strongly disagree'

   A specialist writing programme would fulfill a demand that is not currently being met consistently across the Business School.

   1. 10 **2** 21 **3** 41 **4** 74 **5** 87

   a) Writing style should be regarded as a key skill for students' professional development.

   1 8 **2** 13 **3** 21 **4** 92 **5** 89

   b) Too often it is assumed that students have already achieved an adequate level of skill in written composition.

   1 5 **2** 23 **3** 28 **4** 87 **5** 89

   c) Good writing skills complement creative thought processes.

   1 11 **2** 14 **3** 27 **4** 72 **5** 105

1. Do you think WBS would benefit by increasing the provision of writing skills workshops and seminars

   Yes 219 **No** 12

2. If there were a specialist writing programme in WBS would you commit to it voluntarily?

Yes **182** **No** **50**

3. Do you think it should be compulsory for WBS students?

Yes **63** **No** **166**

Section 2: Prototype Writing Sessions

2.1 'An Introduction to Academic Writing', Dr. Mihai Balanescu, Academic Writing Consultant, Student Careers and Skills

These sessions were run for second year undergraduate students from Accounting and Finance, Management, International Management and International Business. Overall there were four lectures with a capacity of 40 students each. Considering that students attended these sessions on a voluntary basis, the register of approximately 30 per session –a coverage of over 100 students in total- indicates a genuine demand for this kind of provision.

The lectures were introductory in nature, covering issues of academic expectation, essay structure, synthesising information, conceptual analysis, basic writing style and academic referencing. A significant portion of the session was dedicated to helping students navigate the support available to them: personal tutors, librarians, and skills services.

Although the students were all in their second year they were clearly engaged with the topic. Some of the students' comments suggested that this was their first experience of academic writing tuition and that it should be available in the first year as a core element of their degree. Those students on courses requiring advanced numeracy skills admitted that they had been surprised and daunted upon coming to university by the expectation that they write strong academic essays and reports. They were especially grateful for the kind of tuition available through these sessions.

What did you find most useful or memorable about the session?

- Teaching essay structure
- Describing how to use tentative language
- The importance of introductions
- Avoiding passive language
- Subject specific examples of good writing practice were praised by several of the students (some comments called for more such examples).

How would it apply to your academic work now?

- 'It was very informative as I have never received any formal guideline on proper academic writing prior to this session.'
- 'Useful for Global Integrative Project.'
- 'I struggle with writing under pressure in exams - this will help my structure in future.'
- I am going to revise my current essays now, thinking about how to synthesize information etc.

One issue which emerged in the course of this research, and of necessity due to economic viability, is that of scalability. How would students like to receive academic writing tuition? And how might WBS deliver academic writing tuition in an economically sustainable way?

Delivery Method: 90 preferred active workshops; 73 preferred one-to-one tutorials; 52 preferred seminars; 40 preferred lectures

Fig.1. Student response on the question of delivery method

Although according to the general statistical feedback one-to-one tutorials were preferred to lectures, it is perhaps surprising that active workshops were the most popular method of delivery. This is significant because it suggests that peer review and practical group exercises are highly valued. Indeed, in this case, many of the student respondents viewed the small lecture format as akin to a workshop due to the extent of interaction between the lecturer and the students. The students asked questions throughout the session and, although there were time restraints due to the amount of material to be covered in a single session, the lecturer managed to engage the students with practical examples. Perhaps the most successful component of the session was the practical and subject-specific examples given by the lecturer. These came directly from WBS modules and allowed the students to quickly contextualise their understanding of 'evidence', 'analysis' etc. Several students asked for more such examples. Given more time – a series of sessions, instead of just one – this kind of integration between subject-specific material and issues of academic writing could be fruitfully developed.

In the focus groups students emphasised how practical they found these introductory sessions. One theme which emerged was the different levels of interest between international students for whom English is not their first language and domestic (or more broadly Anglophone) students. Many of the international students welcomed the opportunity to be inducted into the academic writing style appropriate to an English university. The implication was that they had cultural as well as linguistic

reasons for struggling with essay writing and written reports. Domestic students were more surprised that they had found the session useful. One student, revealing himself to be reasonably confident in his writing style, admitted that he had learnt a lot. He also saw ways in which the academic writing provision could become more advanced:

> It was better than I thought it would be - I don't struggle with writing personally and yet even I learned something … I would really appreciate [a more creative] type of thing – that's what going to get you a 1st. Creative writing is a skill you need for your degree, job interviews –its transferable and it would be so useful.

Two points emerge from this: the cultural and linguistic specificity of academic writing in an English university; and the broad scope for skills provision under the aegis of academic writing, moving into aspects of creativity and argumentation.

2.2 Writing Masterclasses Professor Richard Miller, Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Center, Rutgers

Professor Miller ran two academic writing sessions over course of the WBS Writing Day, one for undergraduate students, the other for MA/MSc/MBA students. Student attendance of between 10 and 15 students per session was reasonable, considering that the sessions were not timetabled.

Professor Miller's theme, which he presented formally at the 'What is Academic Writing?' conference, was the impact of new media on academic writing. He made the case that academic writing was rapidly changing as a result of new technologies and new media, and that this change in 'how we write' is reflected in 'how we research' and 'how we think'. He provided examples of his own students' assessed writing, emphasising its use of multimedia features and its status as a published work on the internet. From these source texts he interrogated research methods, demonstrating how rich in primary resources the internet is. Finally, he suggested that students should be thinking, and encouraged to think as part of their academic work, of creative ways to use and represent these resources.

His argument provoked students (and staff) to think about their intellectual adaptability as well as the specifics of their writing style. The clear consequence of this thread was that writing is inseparable from a broad range of academic skills and concerns.

The students responded positively to his talk, though, as might be expected from a session which challenged many of the orthodoxies of academic writing, they did not find it immediately applicable to their work.

What did you find most useful or memorable about the session?

- Interesting lecturer, useful resources
- The importance of invention and creativity

- The use of multi-media

How would it apply to your academic work now?

- Unfortunately, it was not useful to my need for help with academic writing. There were no useable tips. (BSc student)
- How to bring my dissertation to life (MSc student)
- Using visual tools in my writing to bring my work to life (MBA student)

In a focus group with undergraduate International Management students after the session it emerged that the students found their ideas inspiring and wished that their written assignments could incorporate more of these creative elements. However, they were sceptical as to relevance of Professor Miller's talk to the practice of their academic work. They lamented the lack of risk and original/creative thinking in their curriculum. They welcomed the idea of a writing programme which might incorporate creativity as well as technical excellence.

2.3 Focus group for Case Study Writing course and follow-up, Dr Rochelle Sibley, Academic Writing Programme

This 90-minute focus group was held on 5th May 2011 in order to gauge opinion and collect ideas from the PhD students about a proposed Case Study Writing course for WBS, to be designed and taught by the Academic Writing Programme. The purpose of this course would be to train PhD students to write up their research and that of their supervisors as case studies for use in teaching undergraduates at WBS.

The focus group was attended by five PhD students and concentrated on the following issues:

- What makes a good case study?
- How is a case study narrative different to other academic narratives?
- How are case studies used in teaching undergraduates?
- What tools/strategies would PhD students need in order to write up a case study?

The PhD students were very keen to discuss these ideas, and the focus group was extremely productive in its generation of parameters for defining a good case study and the different ways in which case studies can be utilised. Since a considerable portion of the time was given over to discussing how to teach case studies, the Case Study Writing course will now incorporate teaching methods and peer-observed teaching of the resulting case studies in undergraduate seminars.

The participants were very enthusiastic about the concept of the course, particularly since it combines academic writing guidance with the practical application of their work. They commented

that they had not experienced this type of practical academic writing training before, and could immediately see how it could benefit themselves and their undergraduate students. The discussion was extremely useful in highlighting the value of consulting with the potential participants of any academic writing course or module, since the PhD students were able to offer suggestions based on their existing experience of teaching case studies.

In addition to the focus group on 5th May 2011, two of the PhD students who attended also came to a session which Rochelle Sibley ran as part of the WBS Writing Day on 9th May 2011. This looked at the example of the Case Study Writing course and sought feedback from other PhD students and supervisory staff about other potential avenues of academic writing support. The session began by discussing other ways in which PhD students can contribute to the production of teaching materials for WBS in order to promote best practice in writing and teaching strategies. It then moved on to solicit the PhD students' views on the current provision of academic writing support, which produced some interesting responses. The two students who had attended the focus group said that they had started an informal peer review policy where they read each other's work, and the other participants were very enthusiastic about the wider implementation of such a system amongst the PhD students. The general feeling was that the current provision of academic writing support was good in terms of the material covered, but needed to be more extensive in order to encourage greater engagement from the students. One student praised the doctoral dayschools offered by the Academic Writing Programme but added that more workshops and peer review provision would allow students to feel more confident about their writing.

2.4 MBA for IBM Effective Writing lecture, Dr Rochelle Sibley, Academic Writing Programme

This session was a 2.25 hour lecture delivered to the MBA for IBM cohort (approx. 90 students) at WBS on 8th May 2011. Two meetings were held between Rochelle Sibley and Richard Wheeler to ensure that the content would meet the requirements of the students. As a result, the lecture was divided into two sections; the first half focused on the writing process and the requirements of the Warwick MBA assignments, while the second section covered critical thinking and the creative application of knowledge.

The aims of the lecture were to provide the students with strategies to help them plan and direct their writing, as well as giving a framework for critical and creative engagement with module material. The lecture emphasized the need for original thought in assignments as well as stressing the importance of effective structure in any written work. By offering templates for best practice in writing, the lecture encouraged the students to be consciously aware of how effectively their writing communicates with its readers, in both academic and professional contexts.

On the day the lecture went well, and received very positive feedback, but the students and the lecturer felt that more time was needed in order to cover this breadth of material. While it is difficult to schedule writing support for remote access students, a more interactive, workshop style approach would've been more engaging for the students and allowed for them to get more involved in the topic.

A questionnaire was given out at the end of the session to gauge the cohorts' view on academic writing provision within their degree. This revealed that the most common causes of concern for students are:

- structuring an argument
- writing concisely
- demonstrating critical thinking
- providing sufficient evidence

Students also requested more interactive sessions and specific examples to illustrate the ideas being presented, both of which would've been possible given more teaching time. Over 70% of those questioned felt that further academic writing support was necessary, with the most popular forms of provision being an online database of materials (80% in favour) and online live one-to-one feedback sessions (57% in favour). It should be noted that this was a distance-learning cohort, so their views and requirements are very different to those of the full-time students at WBS. Even so, it was clear that a more comprehensive package of academic writing support was be received positively by the students. It was also evident that any future provision of academic writing tuition must acknowledge the different needs of the various types of students at WBS.

Section 3: Persistent Concerns

In this section we shall indicate some of the persistent concerns which emerged through the student feedback to these writing events.

3.1 The International Perspective

Many international students felt that they had to been formally inducted into academic writing in this country. There was also the expected linguistic concern for those whose first language is not English:

> Coming from abroad I feel there are different styles and expectations of writing – This is something that should have come in the first year. (BSc student)

> Register is especially problematic for students for whom English is a second language, which is why they often make use of the wrong vocabulary, e.g. either too informal or simply adding to ambiguity of expression. (BSc student)

This raises the question of targeting writing sessions. Some students feel they are advanced at writing but still want to avail of academic writing provision.

> More on target audience. I do the long distance MBA where for a lot of students English is not their second language therefore writing course would have to be optional. (MBA student)

3.2 Skills

The question of how broadly we define academic writing is raised again and again, especially by postgraduate students keen to think about the impact of their written work and the context of its dissemination.

> How to write academic articles. Students need to read them constantly, may be worth knowing how to write them to critically assess their value. (MA student)

> I'm actually MPA not MBA and we often have to write reports that set out a range of options for others to decide upon; that takes a particular set of skills. (MPA student)

> I would like to have presentation techniques/rhetoric included in the programme. So that it is not only about writing but also about speaking. (MBA student)

> I think people adopt ad hoc methods for compiling assignments, including delegating sections to different people, and then seeking several rounds of review and editing (in particular via track changes in word). I think this results in poor structure of argument, problems relating to changes in style, and 'editing by committee'. Some guidance as to how to best delegate work and compile the results would be very useful. (MBA student)

Some undergraduate students expressed a desire to see an approach to academic writing would not simply entail a series of formal rules. After the lecture by Dr Balanescu one student responded by writing:

> More interactive, participative and engaging with examples and cases of good (and bad) writing practice. (BA student)

When we asked undergraduates whether they thought a writing programme might entail more than learning about conventional essay structures we found them to be generally receptive:

> I would really appreciate [a more creative] type of thing – that's what going to get you a 1st. Creative writing is a skill you need for your degree, job interviews –its transferable and it would be so useful. (BSc student)

> When you're asked to give your point of view or to stand out in exams/assessments … everyone's using the same argument so creativity might get you a little further. (BSc student)

This is supported by the students' preferences when it came to skills and issues they would like to see covered. 'Creativity of expression' proved to be more in demand than the more technical aspects of writing, grammar or referencing.

Which skills/issues would you like to see covered by a writing programme? Statistical preferences of 234 students:
1.Essay structure
2.Critical thinking/rigour
3.Creativity of expression
4.Grammar
5.References
6.Engaging with different audiences
7.Writing for presentation
8.Collaborative writing
9. Proofreading

Fig.2. Student response on the question of which skills they would like to see covered on a writing programme

3.3 Content

Another major theme which emerged from the student feedback was the extent to which academic writing would be integrated into the existing academic curriculum in an advanced and challenging manner. This was true of some undergraduate students, who looked to improve a specific aspect of their writing (e.g. writing a report), as well as of postgraduate students. Certain responses indicated a concern that academic writing would take time away from serious academic work:

> I would hope this was an advanced course - e.g. teaching key report writing/essay writing styles - i.e. not too patronising! (BSc student)

> MBA students come from a variety of backgrounds, and many have excellent writing skills already. Writing skills should be a basic prerequisite for entering a top graduate program. The time devoted to core business courses study should not be diluted with basic writing courses. Such writing instruction might be made available to students who wish to improve via optional professional development seminars. Also, writing can be learned at many colleges and universities, but a top-notch business education is the province of fewer universities. Especially at the graduate level, required courses should consist of core business skills and relevant specialist electives. (MBA student)

Section 4: WBS Staff

We also canvassed the opinion of WBS staff on the current provision of academic writing skills. 31 academic staff members responded to our questionnaire.

Do you think that WBS would benefit by increasing the provision of writing skills workshops and seminars?

Yes 29 **No 2**

Do you think a Business Writing module should be compulsory for WBS students at some level of study?

Yes 17 **No 13**

When considering the mode of delivery of academic writing, WBS staff shared many of the same concerns as the students. They identified the linguistic needs of some international students which might provide a challenge to the integration of a more advanced programme of academic writing.

> For some of our students English language is the problem – they simply don't have a good grasp of the language and this has a huge impact on their written work – mostly an issue at PG level as our UGs are here for 3/4 years so tend to improve over time. I don't think that this should be covered in the type of support you're proposing but should be taken into account since some students might need support with basic language before your proposed modules would be suitable for them.

On the other hand, there were reservations about the possibility of a useful writing module which would be convened apart from 'substantive academic modules'.

> From a WBS point of view writing is only one half of the problem. The other half is critical thinking and analysis. "Creative" writing per se is not essential but clarity, parsimony and the construction of a coherent written argument based on critical reflection and analysis is paramount.

> A module on writing is not a good idea – writing should develop from substantive academic modules, not be something that is taught as stand-alone. I think this idea is very negative and will not reflect well on the school

Finally, due to the composition of the WBS student body questions were raised regarding distance learning provision, although these may be addressed by the new MBA for IBM model of academic writing provision and the DLMBA induction sessions.

> There is no indication of how such a module would be delivered to distance learning and blended learning students, who now comprise a significant part of WBS student body.

> It would be best delivered by online learning using live classrooms, discussion forums and websites for the 3000 distance learning students we have.

Appendix 6: Questionnaire for Research Report

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/iatl/projects/fellowships/grier/staff_survey/wbs_student_survey/

Appendix 7: Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning What Is Academic Writing? (9 May 2011)

Following the successful 'What is Feedback?' day last term, there will be a similar session on academic writing on May 9th from 11-3 in the Teaching Grid. There will be a variety of internal speakers and presentations, and a number of visitors from outside the University will give us the benefit of their experience: we have Professor Richard Miller from the Plangere Writing Centre at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and Dr Matthew Martin from St. Mary's University College, Belfast. Topics covered will range from academic writing for undergraduates, through MA and PhD students, to writing for publication.

Programme

10.30 Coffee

11.00 Introduction: Dr Nick Monk, IATL Research Fellow

11.10 Keynote: Professor Richard Miller, Rutgers University: Writing Instruction in the US: A Brief History of the Near Future

11.50 Coffee

12.10 Dr Cathia Jenainati, Warwick Writing Programme: 'Academic Writing across the Disciplines'.

12.30 Dr Catherine Hanley, and Sarah Foster-Ogg, IATL: 'Teaching Undergraduates to Write for Publication'.

12.50 Jeremy Treglown, Warwick Writing Programme: 'Writing for our Readers'.

13.10 Lunch

14.00 Dr Mihai Balanescu, Student Careers and Skills, Warwick: 'Forgetting the Reader: Complexity of Idea versus Simplicity of Rendition in Academic Writing'.

14.20 Dr Gerard. P. Sharpling, Centre for Applied Linguistics, Warwick: 'Interfaces between Applied Linguistics and Academic Writing'.

14.40 Dr Matthew Martin, St. Mary's University College, Belfast: 'Peer Tutoring across the Disciplines'.

Richard Miller

Richard E. Miller, Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Center, is the author of Writing at the End of the World (Pittsburgh, 2005), As If Learning Mattered: Reforming Higher Education (Cornell, 1998), and co-author of The New Humanities Reader (Cengage, 4th edition, 2011), a textbook used

in first-year writing courses in high schools, colleges, and universities across the country. Together with Paul D. Hammond, Director of Digital Initiatives in the Rutgers University Writing Program, Professor Miller has spent the past four years developing a revitalized version of the humanities that engages with the sciences and the social sciences to improve the quality of human life by addressing the biggest problems of our time. This multi-faceted, interdisciplinary project includes: designing new spaces for learning and performance; developing new curricula which aim to foster creativity and curiosity; and launching collaborative projects that seek to engage the public sphere. Their collaborative multimedia pieces, which are posted on YouTube and on text2cloud.com, have made Miller and Hammond central figures in a nationwide discussion about what role writing--with words, still and moving images, sounds, and data--will play in all the disciplines in the decades ahead.

Matthew Martin

Matthew Martin is from Indiana, did a BA in English and Philosophy at Indiana University, and a Masters and PhD at the University of Michigan. During his PhD studies, he did a year's research at Queen's University in Belfast and settled there soon after. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in English at St Mary's University College in Belfast where he helped to found the first Peer Tutoring-based academic writing centre in the UK and was a Team Leader in the St Mary's CETL project which was aimed at disseminating good writing centre practice and cross-disciplinary writing centre programmes to other HE institutions in Ireland and the UK.

Appendix 8: WBS Writing Day Programme (10 May 2011)

Time	Session	Location
09:00 – 09:45	*Undergraduate Writing*, Dr Mihai Balanescu (Academic Writing Consultant, Careers and Skills) and Dr Barry Sheils (IATL) – led by Grier Palmer (WBS)	B1.19
10:00 – 11:00	*Undergraduate Writing Masterclass*, Professor Richard Miller (Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Center, Rutgers) ***STUDENTS ONLY***	*B1.19*
11:20 – 12:10	*Teaching the Teachers*, Professor Richard Miller (Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Center, Rutgers)	B3.19
12:10 – 13:15	*Teaching Student Writing*, Dr Cathia Jenainati (Academic Writing Programme, English Department)	B3.19
13:15 – 14:00	Networking Lunch	WBS Lounge
14:00 – 15:00	*In-module Co-teaching of Writing*, Dr Cathia Jenainati (Academic Writing Programme, English Department)	B3.19
15:15 – 16:00	*PhD Writing*, Dr Rochelle Sibley (Academic Writing Programme, English Department) and Dr Cathia Jenainati (Academic Writing Programme, English Department) –introduced by Dr Nick Monk (IATL)	B3.19
16:00 – 17:00	*MBA Writing Masterclass*, Professor Richard Miller (Executive Director of the Plangere Writing Center, Rutgers) ***STUDENTS ONLY***	*B1.19*

Appendix 9: Academic Writing Bibliography

Bailey, S. , 2011. Academic writing for international students of business. Abingdon: Routledge

Peck, J. and Coyle M., 2005. Write it right: A handbook for students, Palgrave Study Skills. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Redman P. and Maples W., 2011. Good essay writing: A social sciences guide. 4th ed. London: Sage

Wallace M. and Wray, A., 2011. Critical reading and writing for postgraduates. 2nd ed. London: Sage