

eca

edinburgh college of art

Student Services

Annual Report – 2004-2005

{This published version of this document has been amended as in our view could be in breach of s.38 (1)(a) (personal data of which the applicant is the data subject) of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.}

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 GENERAL OVERVIEW

The specific services which encompass Student Support Services are the:

- Counselling Service
- Disability and Academic Support
- Language Support
- Student Accommodation Service
- Employability: Careers Education, Information and Guidance Service
- International Student Advice
- Student Exchange Co-ordination

Student Services also coordinate our partnership with the University of Edinburgh in the areas of Student Health Care and Sports and Exercise.

The following reports on Student Support Service's fourth year of operation.

Please note the overall eca student population for 2004-05:

Number of full-time students - 1879
Number of part-time students - 146

Number of male students - 747
Number of female students - 1278

Number of Home students - 1313
Number of EU students - 430
Number of international student - 282

Staff at end of year:

Service	Start 2004-05	Start 2005-06
Head of Student Services		
Counselling		
Administration		
Learning Support		
Language Support		
Careers		
Student Accommodation		
Exchange Co-ordination		
International Student Advice		
TOTAL	7.4FTE	7.4FTE

1.2 MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Report on objectives set for 2004-05:	status	comment
To contribute to the review of academic structures college-wide, so that Student Services' policies and procedures are fully considered in final recommendations	met	Report submitted to working group, Spring 2005
To address the lack of rooms available for 1-1 DSA tutoring sessions.	met	Through evening work & Grassmarket room
To establish the "Equality Forum" as a vehicle for promoting consistent good practice in responding to student disabilities reactively and proactively.	met	New Disability, Equality & Diversity Committee, Summer 2005
To adopt the Student Portal as a key means of communication and service enhancement.	met	ongoing
To review the existing procedures for International Student Exchange, regain membership/Charter of the Erasmus Programme and formulate new protocols for the coordination of all exchanges by Student Services.	met	Membership winter 2004 and new procedures in place college-wide
To review Student Accommodation arrangements and maximise the quality of managed flats available.	met	Discussions underway with Unite for new-build
To pilot a Language Programme for international students, in partnership with CVCS to be embedded in the 1st Year Curriculum.	met	See Language Support Section 4.0
To review staff roles and responsibilities regarding administrative duties, taking account of additional requirements generated by functions new to Student Services.	ongoing	ongoing
For the Head of Student Services to sit on the Learning and Teaching Board.	met	Commenced Autumn 2004

That Student Services and Registry share databases to streamline records pertaining to student disability and international exchange, as appropriate.	ongoing	ongoing
To contribute to the debate regarding flexible academic assessments.	met	See Academic Restructure paper, appendix 1

1.3 OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- Boundary issues relating to the Head of Student Services' membership of the board for Mitigating Circumstances addressed.
- Realistic expectations of student accommodation applicants established. No formal complaints received 2004-05.
- Consolidation and "settling in" of new Student Services team, established summer 2004.
- Improved communications with other departments, such as CVCS and Architecture, who require written work
 - Referrals from staff
 - Ongoing discussion of course assessment requirements and consequent needs of students
- Successful Essay Writing Workshops
- Successful pilot of English for Academic Purposes course in collaboration with CVCS (First Year Studies) and Architecture
 - Very good feedback from students
 - Course will run again 2005-06
- The launch of International Student Advice as a new service, well-used by students, and which offers specialist advice (e.g. on visas) which is not available elsewhere in the college
- Liaison with other institutions, e.g. in making bids to the Challenge Fund and with the advisers' network benefits the service and resources offered to students
- Developing induction appropriate to the needs of home and international students
- Successful social events for international students

1.4 DIFFICULTIES EXPERIENCED

- Morale of team adversely affected by the reluctance of the Academic Restructuring Review to take into account the team's experience in working with students who have academic difficulties within current structure.
- developmental and collaborative work frustrated by uncertainties regarding future academic structures
- Students are accepted into the college with low levels of English, making it difficult for them to produce written work to the required degree standard
- Demand for one-to-one appointments consistently outstrips supply during terms one and two; Language Support resources are not sufficient to give all students the support they feel they need on a one to one basis during term time
- Complexity of student timetables makes the running of optional Language Support and Academic Support classes for groups of students impractical

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS/OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-06

- To promote the practice of each student having an identified "personal tutor" with whom they meet termly, with the purpose of reviewing: academic progress; any reasonable adjustments for disability; and other co-curricular concerns, such as language or academic skill development.
- To support appropriate new academic restructuring which embeds the above practice.
- Enhance integration of international and home students
- The development an optional but integrated English Language Programme
- Develop new student accommodation in Lady Lawson Street through UNITE
- Develop interactive accommodation website with downloadable application forms
- Set up system for managing international exchanges to mirror Erasmus system

- The creation of a Disability, Equality and Diversity Committee. This is to replace the Equality Forum and address issues such as compliance and any requirement for new policies and procedures.
- An expansion of information systems for student vacancies (employability)

Head of Student Services
September 2005

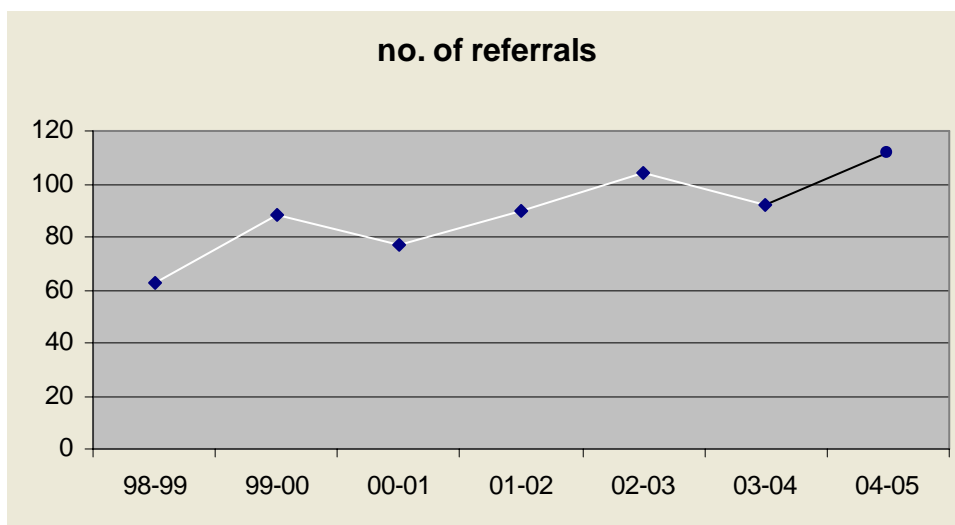
2.0 STUDENT COUNSELLING SERVICE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The Counselling Service continues to be delivered by two counsellors:

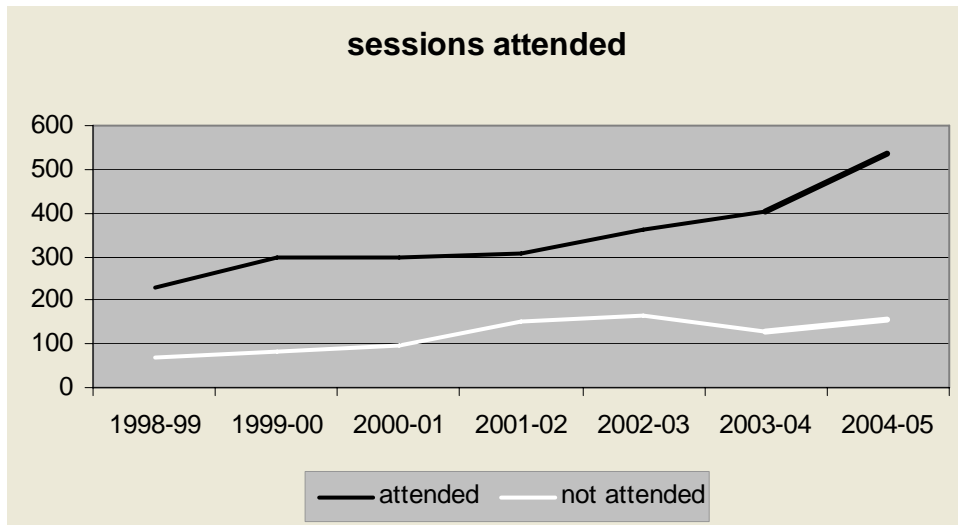
Unlike the majority of College and University Services, no waiting list exists; new referrals can normally be seen within 5 days of initial contact and are offered continuing sessions thereafter, as required. By necessity, counselling is a service offered to students, which remains “hidden”. Often there is no overt interface between this work and other departments/functions in the college. This is recognised as necessary because of the nature of issues presented, ranging from current/past abuse to clinical depression and anxiety disorders. It should be noted however that counselling sessions often cover ground which encompasses students’ approach to their academic studies and associated relationships. Issues addressed in counselling, whether emerging from current or past experiences vary in severity, but inevitably impact on a student’s capacity to engage in their coursework. It is in addressing these issues that the Counselling Service also supports students making choices regarding their own personal and professional development. Inevitably this has a positive effect on student retention figures and, as issues are resolved by the student in counselling, often on the quality of work they are able to achieve. Although this process will be hidden, for the students who do access the service, it offers a valuable support for personal and, in the widest sense, educational development.

2.2 STUDENT DEMAND ON THE SERVICE

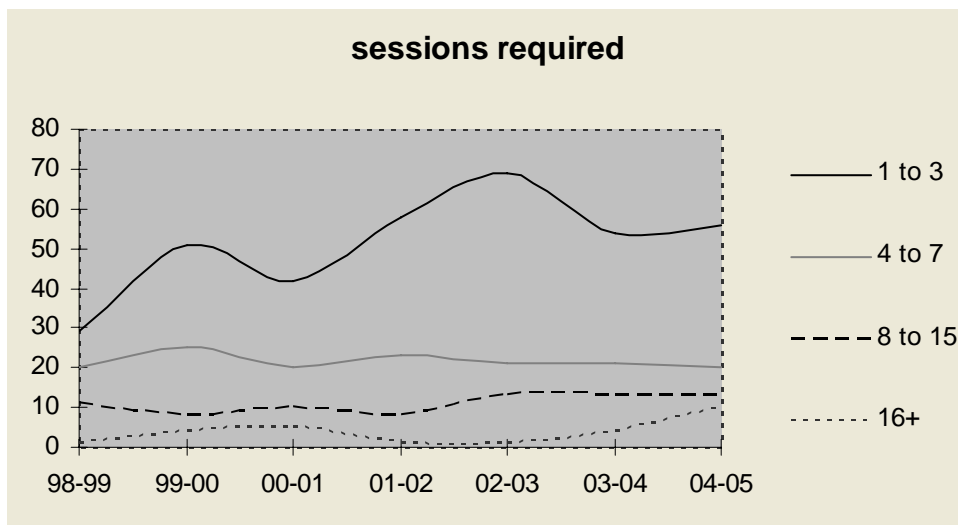


The demand for counselling significantly increased during this session, 2004-05, to **112 referrals**. This is a **22% increase in referrals** [from 92 in 2003-04] and counters last year’s supposition that the base level for referrals is 90. The psychotherapeutic network working nationally in HE are collectively highlighting the deterioration in young people’s mental health due to many complex factors. It would be too simplistic to point towards financial insecurities, changing family demographics or wider societal shifts, however there is no doubt these realities can factor. Whatever the broad picture is, the fact remains that there is an increase in eca students who experience difficulties, that they seek professional help and that these difficulties are increasing in severity, often requiring medicinal intervention. The service has managed this increase in referrals through sacrificing

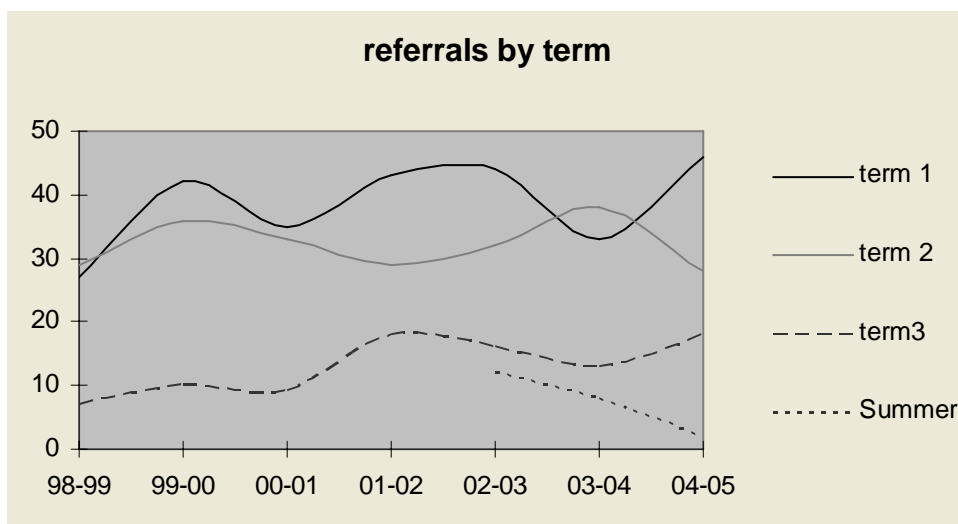
some Head of Student Services administration time and offering back-to-back appointments of up to 6 therapeutic hours (sessions) per day in extreme cases.



This increase translates into the statistics shown above and below, illustrating the number of sessions attended by those 112 students and the number of sessions they required. Non-attendance remains relatively low and has not increased in proportion to the overall number of sessions offered. What can be noted from the graph below, showing the number of sessions required per student, is that there is a greater number of students requiring longer term intervention. This supports our observation that there is an increase in the severity of presenting problems.



It is not so easy to discern any pattern when analysing at what time those referrals were made during the academic year. One could say that we have returned to experiencing the highest referral rate during term 1 and that something unusual happened in 2003-04, during term 2. It also seems fair to say that referrals are rising in term 3 and dropping during the summer, however the graph does look choppy and must be considered in conjunction with varying overall referral rates. Nevertheless it is clear that the **additional 20 referrals were mostly made in term 1.**



2.3 PRESENTING PROBLEMS

The following definition of terms are those which all HEI's and FEI's use when reporting statistics to the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists:

Abuse: *may be mild or serious physical, sexual or psychological abuse – victim of rape and other crimes, prejudice and harassment. These may be past or current experiences.*

Academic: *academic related difficulties/disappointments including complaints and coping with learning difficulties.*

Anxiety: *this may be specific or generalised and includes phobias, stress, panic, post traumatic stress disorder and obsessive behaviours*

Compulsive Behaviour: *includes feeling driven to act in certain ways –both compulsive and addictive behaviour e.g. drugs, gambling, compulsive video game playing.*

Depression: *includes mood changes and disorders as well as manic episodes can range from lack of concentration/motivation to requiring psychiatric assessment.*

Loss: *includes past, present and prospective loss of person, item or part of one's life. Also includes separation anxiety.*

Other Psychiatric: *includes eating disorders, self harm, psychosis, personality disorders, obsessive thoughts/behaviour and abnormal sexual behaviour.*

Physical Health: *covers physical ill-health, disability, injury, and treatment of these: any physical disorder which affects functioning.*

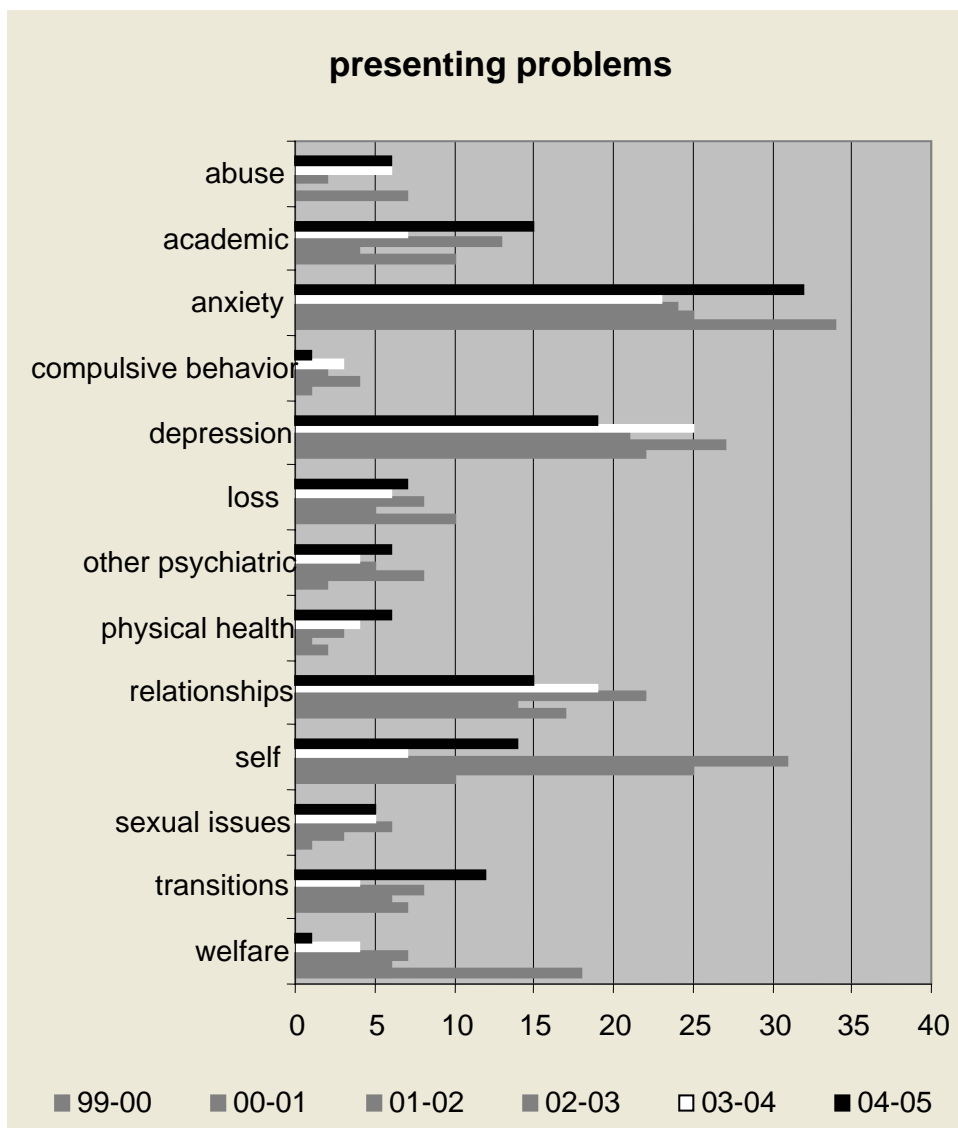
Relationships: *difficulties in one or more aspect of relating to others e.g. intimacy, social skills, family/partner/work relationships.*

Self: *including self esteem and confidence, sexual identity, cultural issues and struggle towards independence and maturity.*

Sexual Issues: *sexual functioning and results of activity e.g. sexual difficulties, HIV and other STDs, pregnancy and fertility.*

Transitions: *including homesickness, separation from partner, change of culture.*

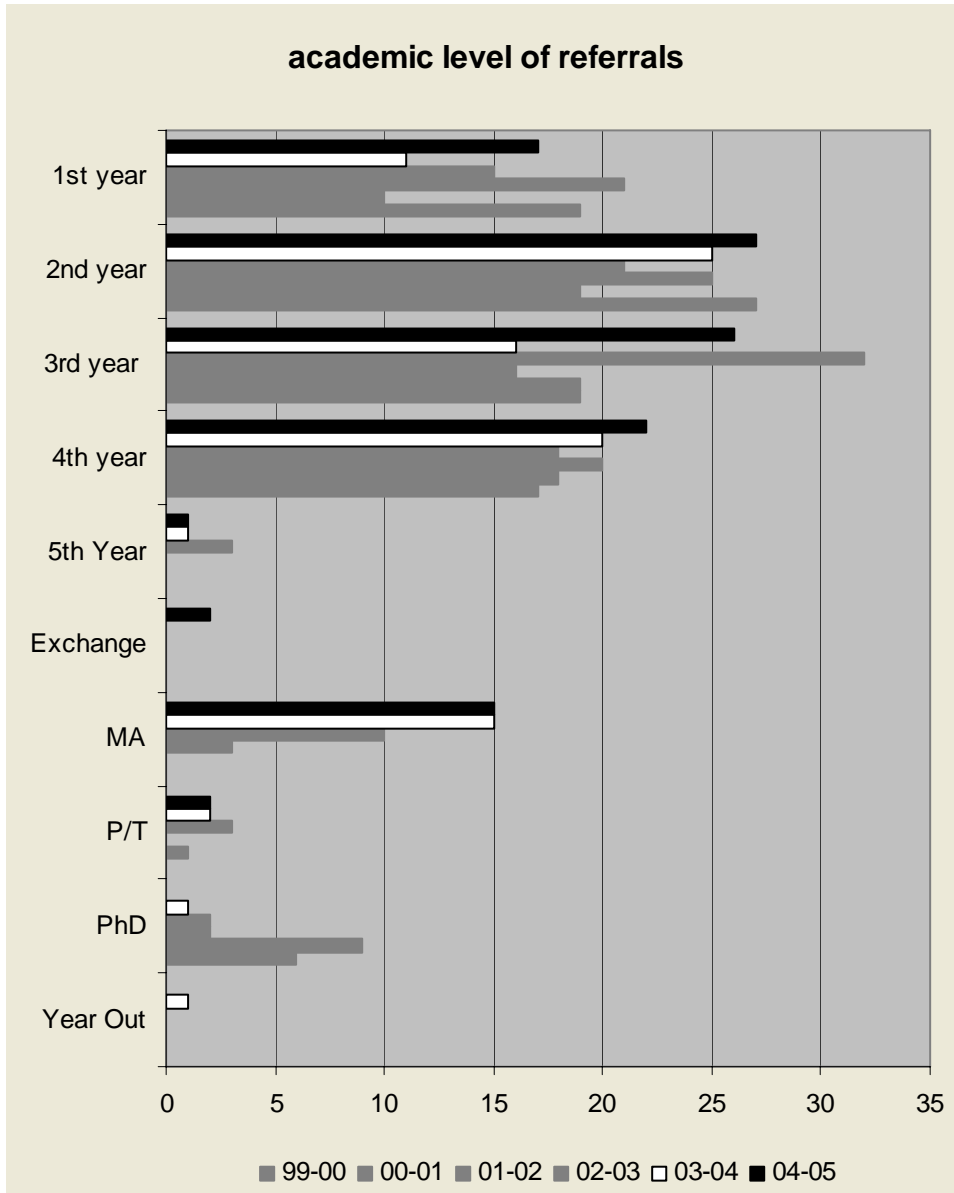
Welfare: *advice, guidance or practical services re financial, legal, accommodation, immigration and vocational matters.*



The above graph illustrates the different problems presented this year, compared with previous years. Certain problem categories are identified as historically fairly stable in the frequency of their occurrence: abuse, academic, compulsive behaviour, loss, other psychiatric, physical health, relationships and sexual issues. Those, however, presenting academic-related problems have doubled in number as has those presenting “self”. It must be noted that this system of classification is not straightforward and is vulnerable to counsellor’s shifting perceptions over the year – this may account for the apparent drop in “self” issues over the years, as counsellors wrestle with e.g. whether a particular presentation is categorically “self” or “relationships”. This aside the big two remain: anxiety and depression and this empirically is reflected in institutions’ reporting throughout the country. “Transitions” have more than doubled in occurrence and this in a year where there has not been an increase in international students. One possibility is that these difficulties with transitions are from home students from non-traditional backgrounds. Similarly welfare issues have declined and this may be symptomatic of enhanced services elsewhere, for example the creation of an International Student Adviser, Wider Access Officer and the Student’s Union.

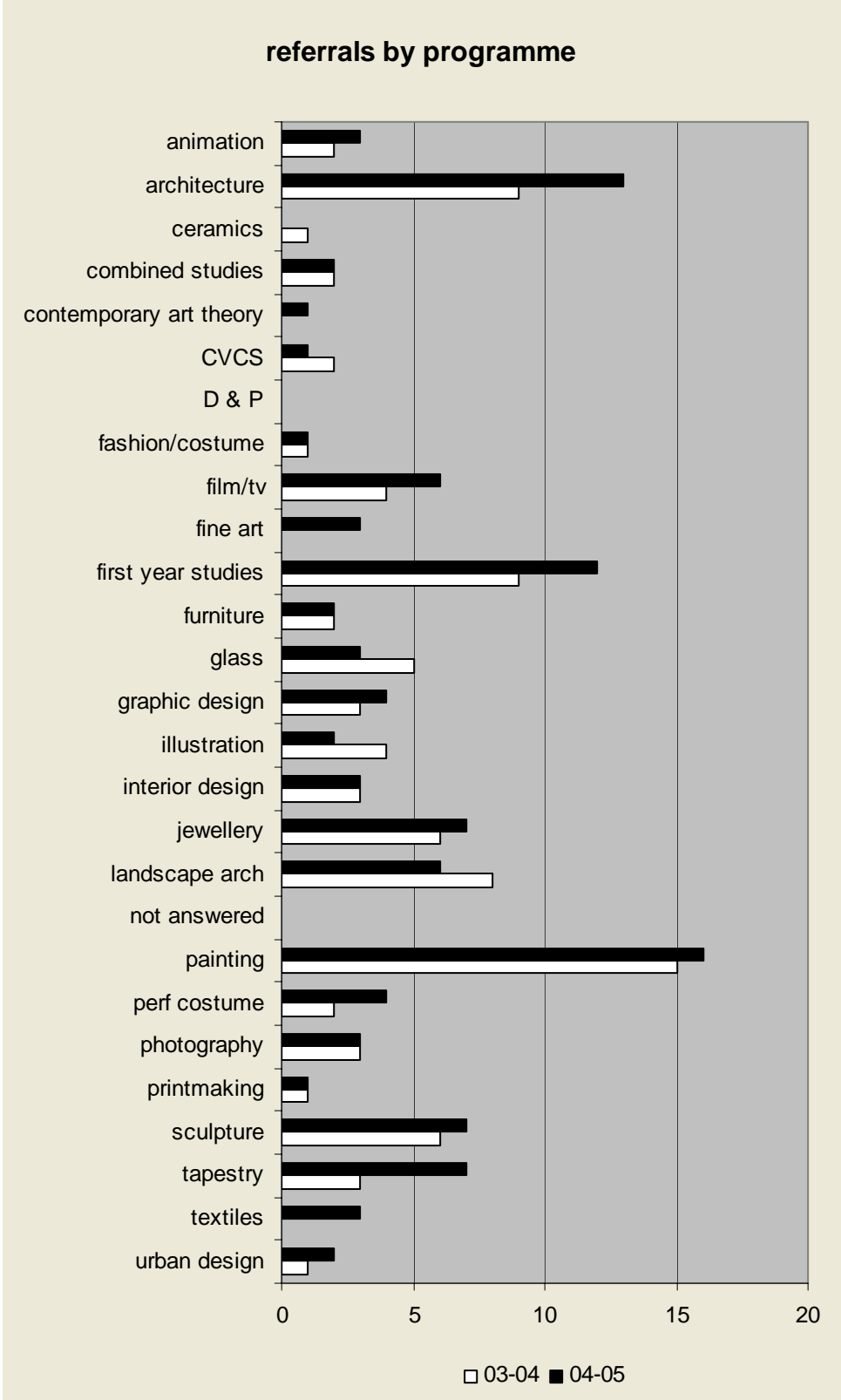
2.4 SOURCES OF REFERRALS

From which year of study a student refers is illustrated below. Again the graph emphasises the comparison with 2003-04 figures and sets this apart



from previous years, for visual clarity. **Increased referrals from First Year** have returned this statistic to previous levels, having dropped for the previous two years (note all 1st yrs including Architecture and Landscape Architecture). The graph also shows that any other **increase in referrals came from year 3.**

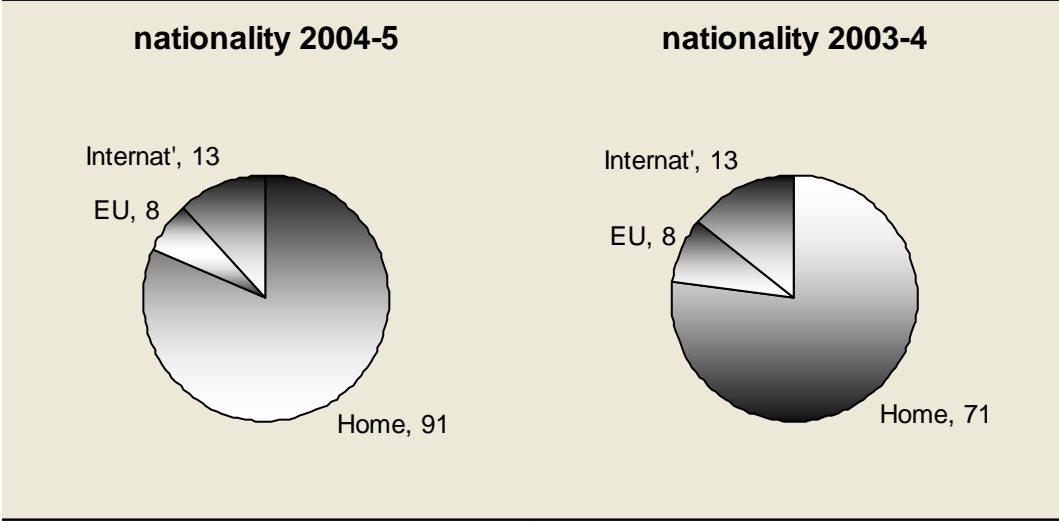
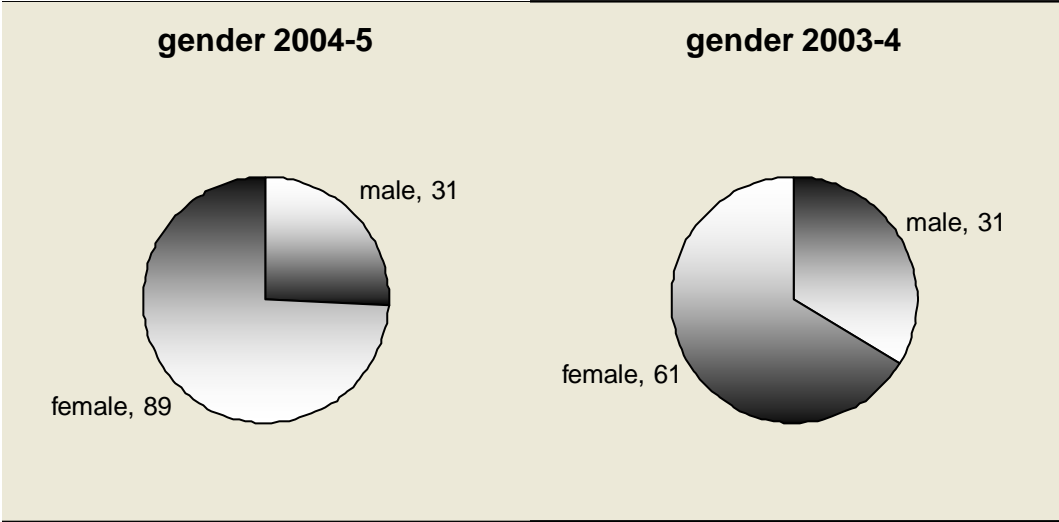
Again, for simplicity, the graph below shows a comparison with 2003-04 of the source of referrals according to clients' programme of study. Earlier year's statistics are available, but do not immediately add anything to this year's analysis.



The previously mentioned **increase in referrals from 1st year** is noticeable here, but note that this is quantifying **Art and Design** first year students only. The graph,

as have graphs in previous reports, does show comparatively stable referrals from respective programmes. Unfortunately the graph does not take into account the ratio of students who have referred from those programmes; programmes do vary dramatically in overall population. We do see a rise in referrals from Architecture and Tapestry; however Architecture has substantially more students enrolled.

The last two observations relate to referrals by gender and by nationality. Clearly the increase in referrals were all female and all home students, as the number of male, International and EU students has stayed static, though they are not necessarily the same students each year.



2.5 REFERRALS TO OTHER SERVICES

The Service continues to refer students to other services both internally and externally, as appropriate. This may result in joint working alongside another specialist or statutory agency or may require no further intervention from the Counselling Service. Over the last year referrals have been made to the following external agencies/organisations:

- Student Representative Council/ Student Union
- Lothian Health Primary Care
- Consumer Credit Counselling Service
- Saheliya (a “Black and Ethnic Minority Mental Health Organisation” for women)
- Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Student Counsellor
August 2005

3.0 DISABILITY AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

3.1 Introduction

The main function of the Disability and Academic Support department is to ensure that any student who is struggling with their academic work has access to appropriate support when they need it.

A further role for this department is to ensure that eca students are not discriminated against because of impairments, conditions or disabilities that they may disclose.

This year has seen the introduction of another layer of legislation through the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2005). The Disability Equality duty will have a significant impact on the college and is likely to have a considerable influence on the work of this department over the coming year. A disability working group will be established to ensure the promotion of disability equality in line with the new act. This is an exciting development and warmly welcomed.

The new act does not give further rights to disabled people; it has come about to address the fact that often disabled people have to fight to assert their rights because they have not been anticipated by public bodies. This has given rise to systematic, institutional discrimination against disabled people.

Public bodies are now obliged to promote disability equality and provide evidence (to be reported annually and published at a minimum on a three yearly basis). Draft Codes of Practice on this have been finalised and copies will be available from the Disability Rights Commission in December 2006.

Next academic year will see the establishment of a Disability Working Group dedicated to putting into practice the requirement to publish an eca disability equality scheme in line with the new act. I look forward to having a significant level of involvement both in this new group and in the Resources Committee.

Jay Kirkland

3.2 NETWORKING AND COLLABORATIONS

3.2.1 Collaboration with HR

This year Student Services Disability Adviser () has collaborated with HR delivering training to all janitorial, cleaning and catering staff. This meant that teaching/training/discussion materials were developed, prepared and delivered. The sessions had very good attendance rates and more training was offered to academic staff during staff development week.

A staff training manual "Barrier Breaking Approaches to Inclusion and Equality" has been written by this department and has developed an alternative web based version to be launched later this year. The downloadable text version can be accessed at http://intra.eca.ac.uk/~studserv/eca_disability_awareness.doc

3.2.2 Networking Externally

Strong and very useful relationships have been developed with disability coordinators and advisors throughout Scotland, with SAAS, a number of LEAs in England, Wales and Ireland and with Stevenson College Access Centre. Developments in the field are kept abreast of via networking opportunities presented through the Scottish Disability Team, Teachability and the Scottish Executive (via Brite training and network). This June saw the inaugural meeting of Assistive Technology Advisers (ATA net) in Glasgow. Jay attended this with a view to being able to pass on the role in future.

3.3 STUDENT DEMAND ON THE SERVICE

3.3.1 Overall demand

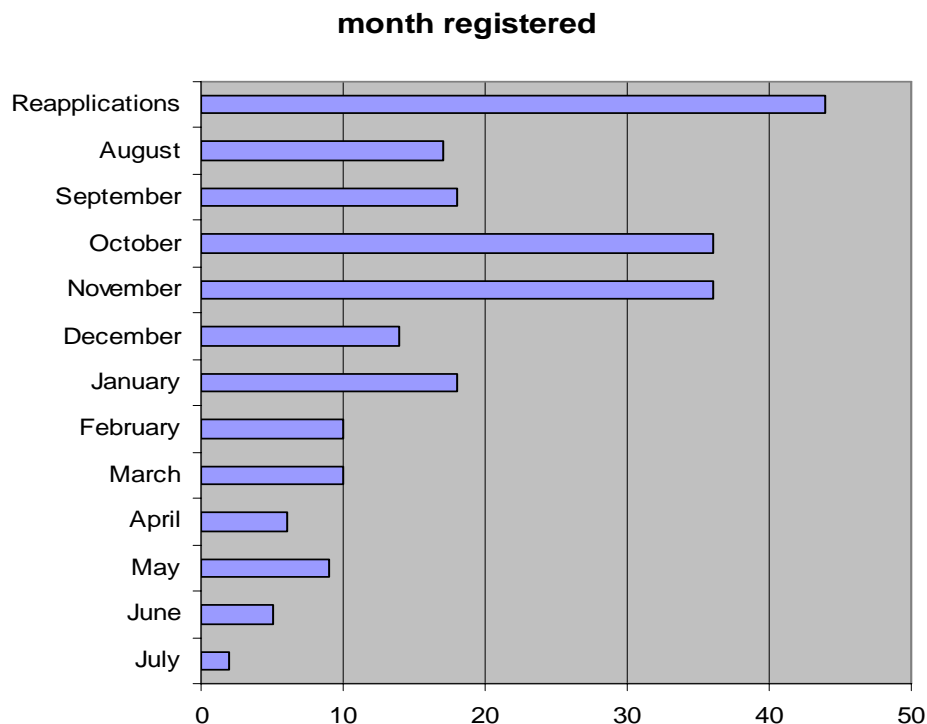
In total there were **296 students** with a disability enrolled at eca. 71 students did not give permission for disclosure of their disability or for records to be kept on them. Therefore the following graphs and statistics are based only on the 225 students who gave their permission.

374 appointments were made with Jay of which 279 appointments were attended.

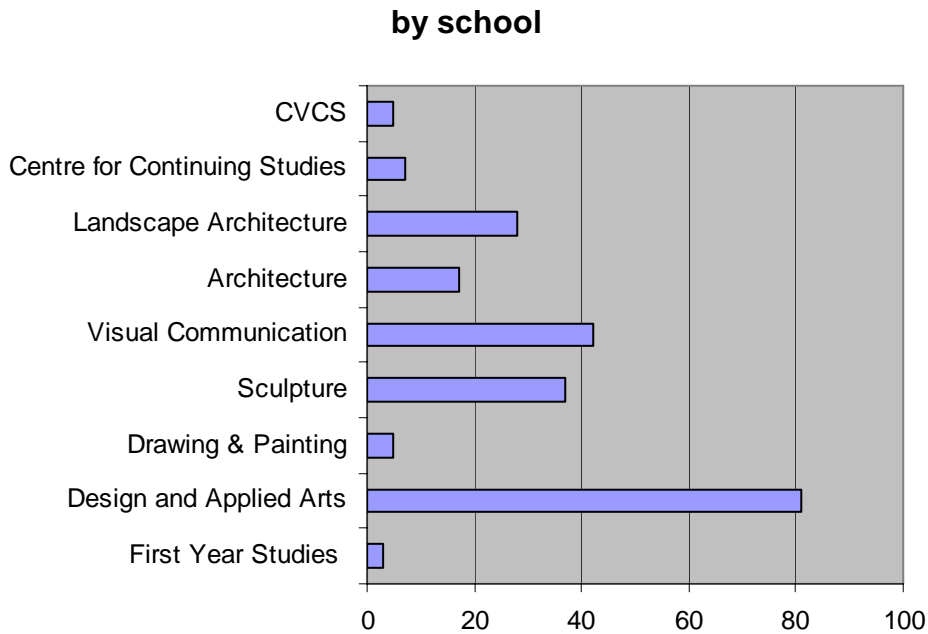
In addition, (Academic Support Tutor) offered 296 appointments and 210 of those were attended. These additional appointments are offered to those students with or without disability, who have difficulties in study skills development.

3.3.2 Month Registered

Traditionally October and November are the busiest months for Student Services Disability Advice and Academic Support Department due to the fact that new students often wait until they are settled before they decide to make contact with the service.

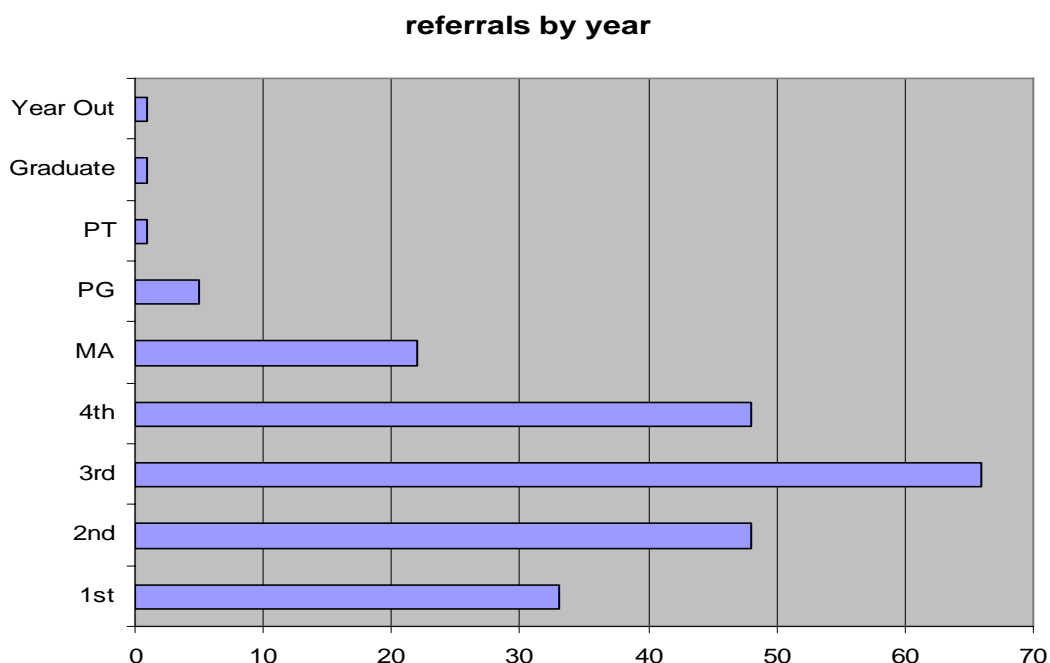


3.3.3 Referrals by School



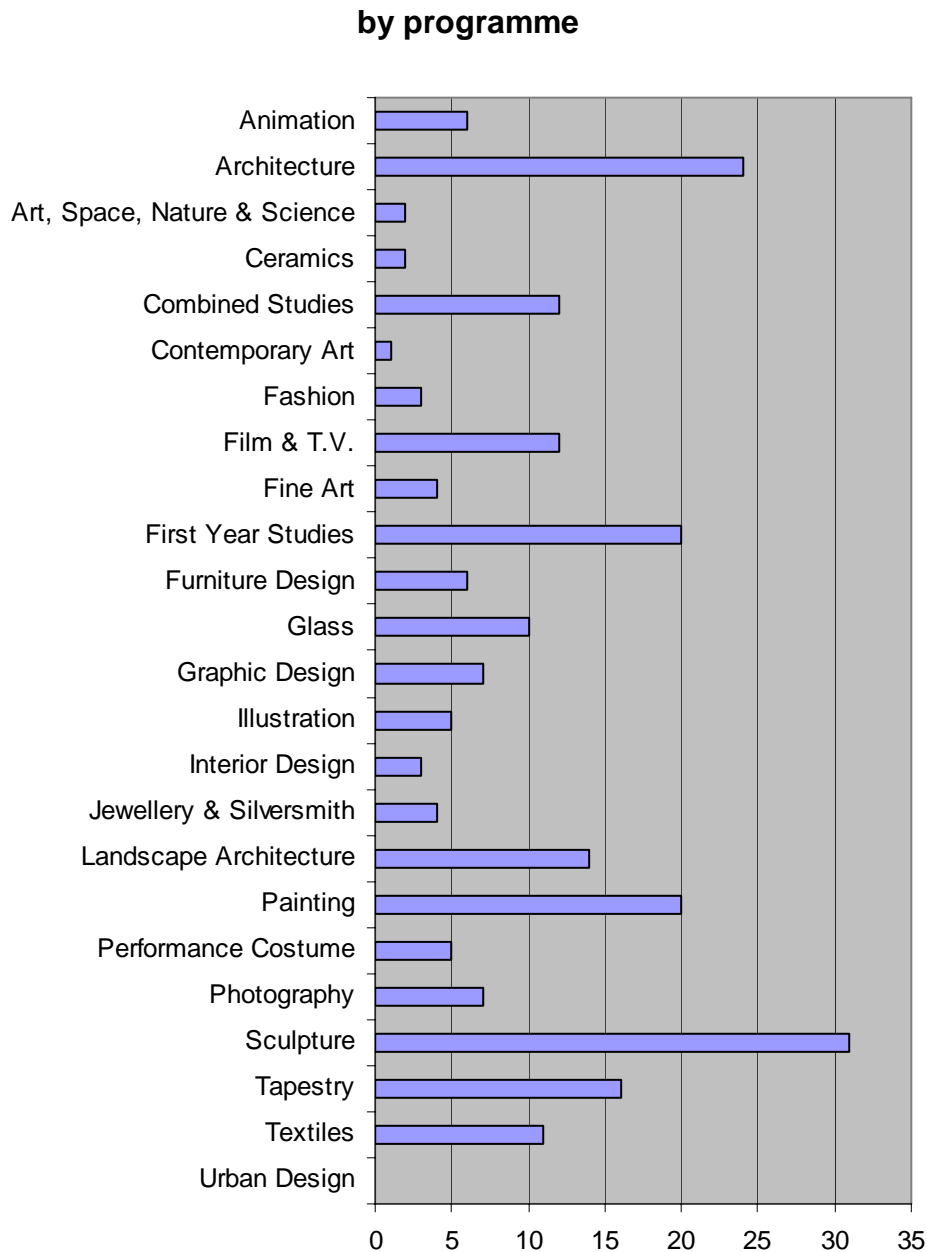
3.3.4 Referrals by Year

The first year figures on this graph include First Year Studies, Architecture, Landscape and CCS students. The high number of referrals from 3rd year students is likely to be because it is at this stage in their studies that they are expected to work in a “self-directed” way. This change in expectation of academic staff often surprises students who have just been managing to cope without specialist support. They have not developed strategies sufficient for working in a self directed way and they start to struggle. Difficulties with time management and organisational skills emerge and impact on the results of assessed tasks prompting them to self refer to Student Services for advice.



3.3.5 Referrals by Programme

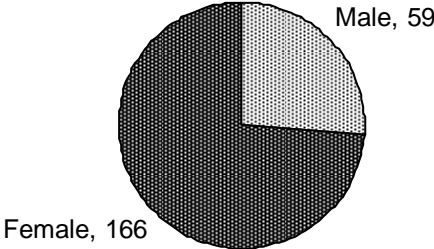
While some referrals have either remained around the same the biggest leaps can be seen between figures for this year's and last years Sculpture, Landscape Architecture, Combined Studies and Architecture referrals. Falling numbers of referrals are evident from Urban Design, Tapestry, Photography, Painting, Interior Design, Fashion and Ceramics.



3.3.6 Referrals by Gender

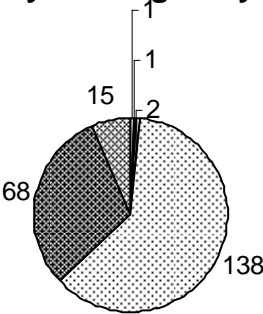
These statistics reflect the gender balance within the college.

by gender



3.3.7 Referrals By Funding Body

by funding body



Andrew Grant Bequest	Channel Isles	NOEAHEF
SAAS	Other LEA	Overseas

* NOEAHEF – National Office for Equality of Access to Higher Education.

3.3.8 Types of Disability

These figures are likely to continue rising as there are now more disabled school entrants and more disabled school leavers are being encouraged to progress into Higher Education.

The high numbers of dyslexic students at eca reflects that of other art institutions. Dyslexic students often gravitate towards art related subjects.

Disability/Impairment	
Dyslexia	275
Deaf/hearing impairment	4
Mobility difficulties	2
Mental Ill Health	2
Unseen Disability	6
Multiple Disabilities	4
Other Disability	3
Total	296

3.4 FREELANCE SPECIALISTS

The department recruits and manages a pool of 5 dyslexia tutors and 3 IT tutors who are able to support students that receive Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). This year Jay screened 90 students for dyslexia, referring 81 of these to a chartered Educational Psychologist (these are approximate figures).

In order to reduce waiting times the services of a second Educational Psychologist was engaged and both psychologists worked throughout the summer. Many of the students who referred during this period will be new to eca in September 2005 and are invited to be assessed before they matriculate. This enables Student Services to put in place reasonable adjustments as soon as possible.

		Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	ALL
04-05	Students Using Tutors	47 Students	41 Students	24 Students	56 Students
03-04	Students Using Tutors	35 Students	37 Students	20 Students	48 Students

		Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	ALL
04-05	Students Referred to Ed Psych	30 Students	30 Students	18 Students	78 Students
03-04	Students Referred to Ed Psych	46 Students	27 Students	24 Students	97 Students
04-05	Ed Psych Waiting Times	100.17 Days	116.27 Days	59.06 Days	83.10 Days
03-04	Ed Psych Waiting Times	82.06 Days	111.6 Days	87.02 Days	91.57 Days

3.5 ESSAY WRITING WORKSHOPS

The academic support tutor (0.3FTE) ran a pilot series of five 90 minute essay writing workshops in term one and this was repeated in term two. It had been identified that many of the students asking for help with essay writing were second year 'direct entry' students and the workshops were advertised as "for 2nd year and beyond".

A total of 32 students attended at least one workshop. Around two-thirds were 2nd year students and there were no final year undergraduates, although some postgraduates did attend. It seems students picked sessions as no student attended all five sessions in either term, although in term two a small core group of students chose to attend three or four workshops.

Evaluation feedback sheets were used and all students giving feedback reported enjoying the workshops and finding them useful. Students mentioned 'giving presentations' and 'report writing' as workshops they would like. Some requested subject-specific material. Around a third of responses mentioned having to miss something else to go to these workshops.

It was important to have a 'neutral' venue for these classes and we are grateful to library staff for the use of the Grassmarket seminar room.

3.6 ISSUES ARISING

3.6.1 Supporting Students with Assistive Technology

A big issue for Disability and Academic Support this year concerned how eca supports students (in particular non "DSA able" students; self funding and international students) who benefit from using assistive technology. has spent a significant amount of time researching how this could be done more effectively by providing assistive technology and appropriate training to staff and students. This is also an employability issue sitting well with the establishment of students' Personal Development Plans (PDP) as well as an educational support issue and therefore an increasing priority regarding supporting students.

3.6.2 Learning Profiles

Improvements to the Learning Profile system made during 2003-04 (electronic distribution rather than paper) have been taken a stage further. Learning Profiles will continue to be sent in the current fashion however at the end of each term it will be possible due to the development of a new electronic filing system to help schools check they have all the Learning Profiles they should have. The files are broken down into School, course and year.

Since the start of 2005 a new database has been created so that information can be quickly gathered and analysed or sent on to those who require it. We will be able to use it to inform Registry of DSA applicants for SAAS returns for example.

The new database means that information can be shared and students supported more efficiently. It will also inform the new requirement of the Disability Discrimination act to publish a Disability Scheme by December 2006.

3.6.3 Student Feedback

True enhancement of the service can only be achieved with more dialogue with students in the form of feedback. This will also inform the work of the Disability Working Group. In order to do this next academic year Jay would like to:

- organise one or two focus groups to establish the most meaningful questions for disabled students regarding their support.
- develop a "chat room" or e-discussion forum for eca students via the portal
- mail out (email?) a survey
- set up an ongoing feedback mechanism via the portal, however this would need to be done with support from Computing Services.

Student Services will continue to promote the vision of an environment where disabled students wishing to participate in any college activity will be able to do so without having to request any special arrangements.

Disability Adviser
September 2005

Academic Support Tutor
September 2005
Section 3.5

4.0 LANGUAGE SUPPORT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

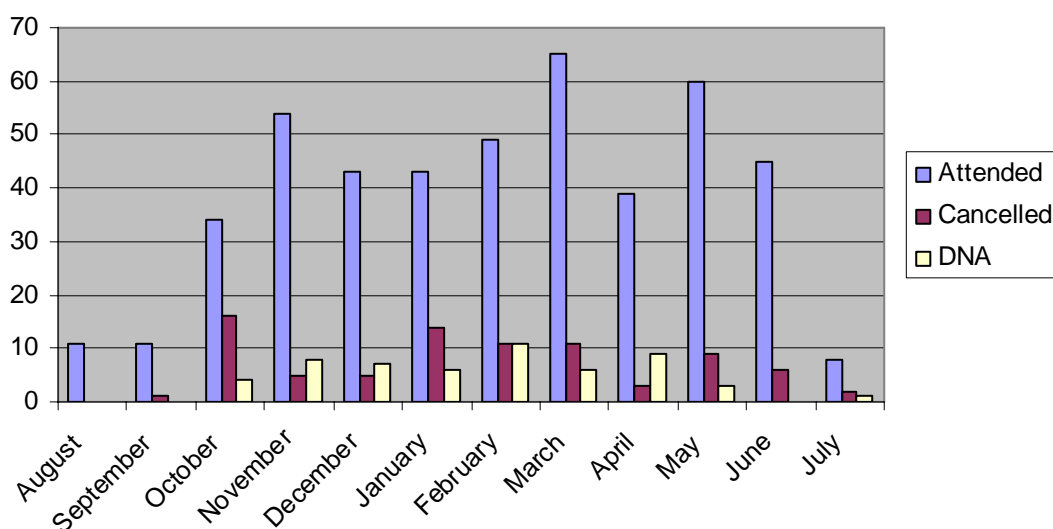
Language Support offers English language tuition to eca students whose first language is not English. Before arriving at eca, students are encouraged to contact the service as soon as possible to agree on their best programme of study. The service has one full-time staff position, which is shared between two tutors on a 0.6/0.4 FTE basis.

4.2 STUDENT DEMAND ON THE SERVICE

4.2.1 One-to-One Appointments with a Language Support Tutor

The majority of students access the service through the one to one tutorial system. This enables the students to focus on particular areas of English where they may be experiencing difficulties, such as presentations, written assignments and comprehension, both aural and reading. This is a popular service which caters for students at varying levels from all departments. The overall number of **students attending one-to-one appointments during 2004-05 was 91**. This represents a slight fall from the previous year's total of 102. The total number of **appointments offered was 667, of which 600 were used**. This represents a **90% attendance rate, a significant rise on last year's 76%**. Almost all the appointments which were not used fell during holiday periods or in the quieter part of the third term.

The following graph shows variations in attendance according to month.

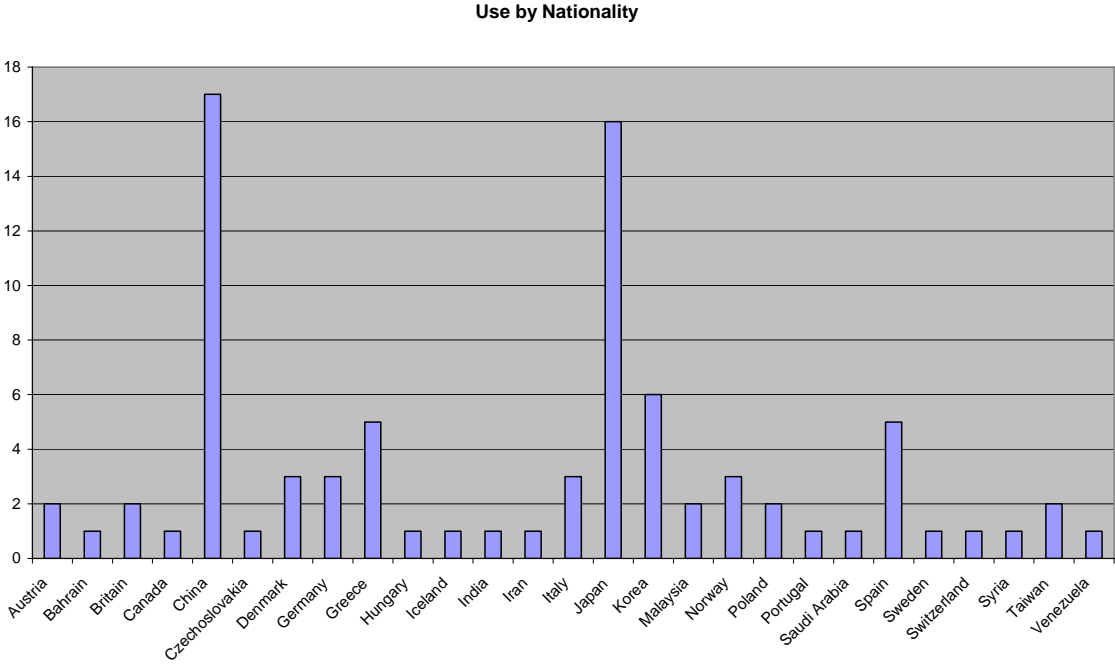


It should be noted that figures for December and April are lower as holiday periods fall at these times. During the weeks of months that fall in term time, demand for appointments is high. Demand tends to be highest from the middle to the end of terms 1 and 2, as essay deadlines approach. However, the graph also shows that demand remained relatively consistent across the three terms, with a reduction in the number of appointments coming only towards the end of term 3.

Overall, the pattern of use was similar to that of 2003-04. One difference is that while demand in session 2003-04 was highest in November, session 2004-05 saw

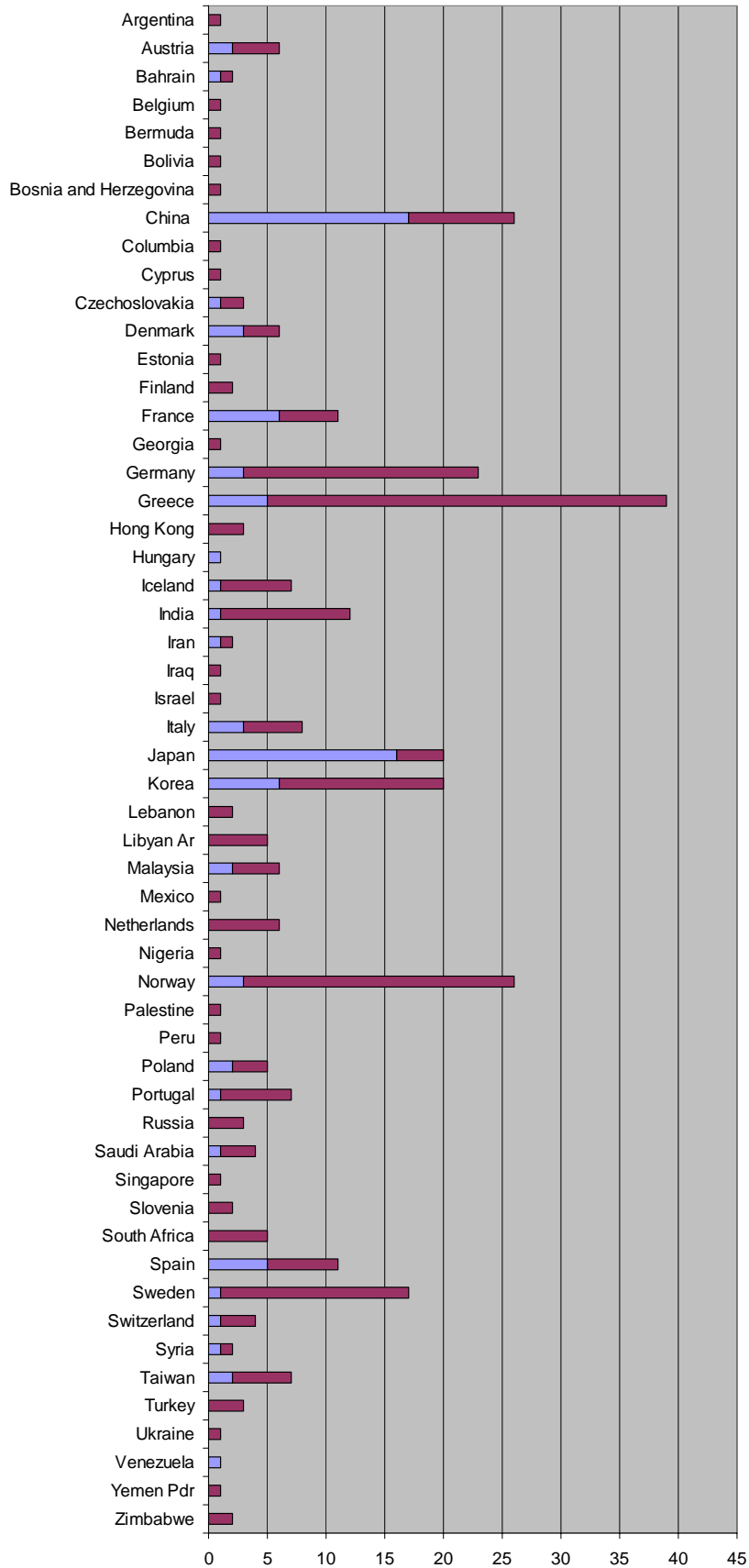
the greatest use of the service in March, followed by May. One possible explanation for the demand for the service peaking in March is the increased use by students of extensions in deadlines for written work, which mean that they continue to work on essays with tutors after the end of the second term.

The first graph below shows demand for the service according to nationality, while the second depicts the numbers of students referring as a proportion of the total number of students of that nationality at eca.

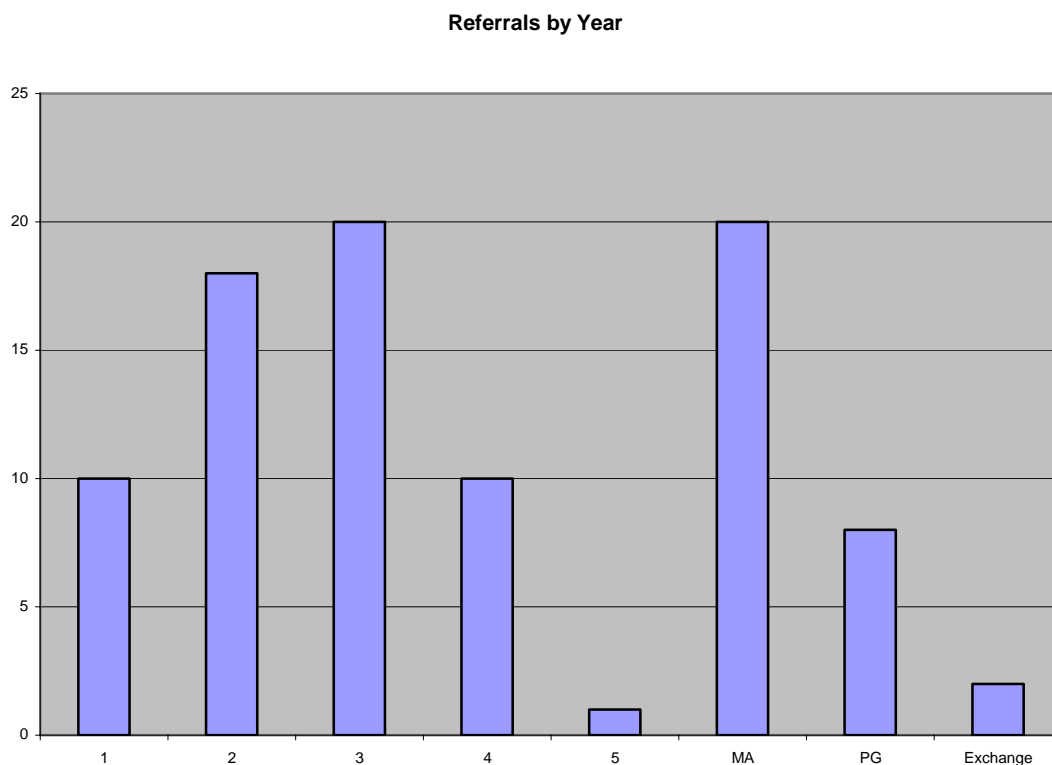
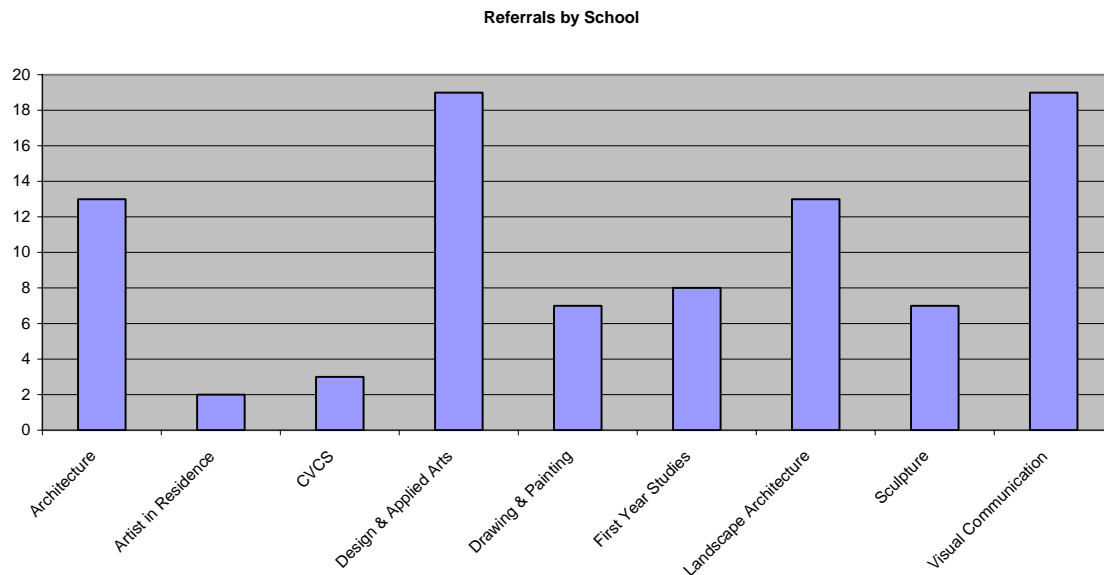


As in the previous year, the largest presenting groups of students are from East Asian countries: China, Japan and Korea. For the first time, though, the single largest nationality group is Chinese rather than Japanese, reflecting an increase in the numbers of students from China in the college.

Use as a Proportion of Nationality Group



The numbers of students attending according to School, and to year, are as follows.

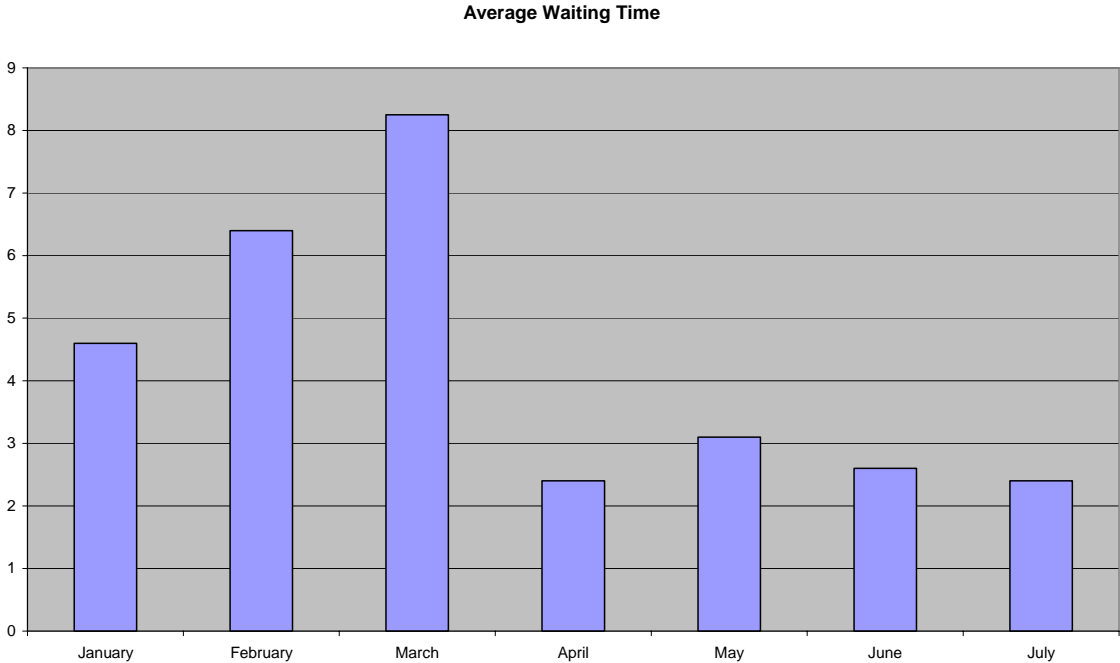


The variation according to School broadly reflects the numbers of students enrolled in each. As in previous years, the largest number is from Design and Applied Arts, although with nineteen referrals this is lower than in 2003-04 where more than thirty DAA students referred. The numbers of referrals from Architecture

and Landscape Architecture also fell slightly. Visual Communication, on the other hand, showed an increase in the number of referrals from eleven to sixteen, making it the second most represented School. Numbers from First Year Studies remained constant. It is not clear why this variation in numbers of students referring from particular Schools occurs, but it may simply be a case of natural variation in student needs over different years.

The pattern of referrals across year groups remained very similar to 2003-04, with the largest numbers of students coming from the Master's programme and second year. 2004-05 saw an increase in the proportion of students referring from third year, however. Many of these students are continuing to use Language Support after initial referrals as direct entrants in second year in 2003-04. Many of the second year students referring in 2004-05 also began using the service as first year students the previous year. This suggests a useful working relationship with students has been established which allows them to build on each year's work. However, it also raises questions over the service's profile for students who are not already familiar with Language Support and what it can offer them. While First Year Studies' referrals remain constant, the number of first year students overall has halved, which means that the twelve first year students referring from Architecture and Landscape Architecture in 2003-04 have been replaced by only two in 2004-05.

Average waiting times for an appointment were collected in terms 2 and 3, as shown below.



These figures represent the average number of working days a student had to wait between approaching Student Services to make an appointment, and actually being seen by a tutor. It can be seen that during the second half of term 2, in particular, there were significant waiting periods. This indicates that demand continues to outstrip supply for this service and that student may have to wait two to three weeks for an appointment at peak times.

This year saw the introduction of a new CVCS system of assessment for third year students, who were offered a range of choices which included presentations, film documentation and portfolios including text, AV and images, for example. Students could choose whether to opt for a standard written assignment or the new format. The latter has proved popular with students as they have been able to choose their own topics and this has resulted in greater involvement and commitment to the work. The plan is to extend the new form of assessment to second year next year. Language Support has worked closely with CVCS working on any issues which may have occurred as a result of the new changes.

4.2.2 Language Classes

English classes for groups of students were launched in the second term of 2003-04 and were continued for the first term of 2004-05. The aim of these was to allow more students to have access to Language Support, particularly as demand for one-to-one appointments continues to outstrip supply. Two classes were held each week during term time: one focusing on writing skills, the other on listening and speaking. These took place on Tuesdays and Thursdays, in the late afternoon, as it was felt that students were more likely to be available at the end of the working day. The venue for both was the Lower Architecture Seminar Room.

The classes held in the previous academic year raised problems of irregular and unpredictable attendance, together with the difficulties of teaching a mixed-level group. For session 2004-05, students were encouraged to sign up for the course in the hope that students who signed up for a particular class would feel more of a sense of commitment and thus attend the classes on a more regular basis than had been the case in the previous year. This however, did not result in improved attendance in spite of a large number of students signing up. A similar pattern of attendance was observed in both classes, with a high turnout at the beginning of term dwindling as the term progressed and students' deadlines approached.

These classes do not provide an optimal teaching environment as class attendance is variable and the level is mixed, resulting in a class which is both difficult to prepare for and problematic to teach. As a result, the decision was taken to stop offering the classes from term 2.

4.3 ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC PURPOSES CLASSES IN COLLABORATION WITH CVCS AND ARCHITECTURE

English for Academic Purposes was launched in response to a need for greater support of students whose first language is not English, many of whom find speaking, listening and essay writing in English very challenging. The course was developed as a credit-bearing module by staff from eca Language Support and the Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies and was taught by Language Support staff in Term 1 of 2004-05.

The module focused on grammar and vocabulary development and was aimed at an upper-intermediate level. 15 international students from First Year Studies and the Masters of Architecture participated. Students from First Year Studies whose level of English was such that they would benefit from the course took the module during the first term as an alternative to the regular CVCS first year course. These students then went on to study visual culture and study skills with CVCS in terms two and three. Four postgraduate students from Architecture participated in the

class in term one, and then continued in a class more specialised on postgraduate academic English in term two.

The group worked well together and feedback from students was positive, indicating they enjoyed the class and found it useful; many also reported an interest in continuing working on speaking and grammar in particular.

4.4 PROBLEM AREAS

The provision of optional classes in the first term highlighted the weakness in a system where there was no requirement in terms of commitment. A sign up sheet had been introduced in order to engender a sense of 'belonging' to the class but in spite of very high attendance in the first few weeks, numbers dropped off and there was a handful of students by the end of term. The inclusion of students at different levels resulted in a class which was both difficult to prepare for and difficult to teach. Feedback conducted informally, in the form of an anonymous questionnaire for course participants, suggested that students were happy enough with the content of the courses, but the number of responses was very low. While it is impossible to give certain reasons for the failure of students to attend, informal discussions with students suggested that students felt other demands on their time, primarily course deadlines or part-time employment, were simply more pressing than the commitment required for language improvement.

The high demand placed on the service throughout teaching terms means it is difficult to accommodate all students requiring one to one appointments. There are simply not enough staff resources available to offer all students the one to one tuition they require. Offering optional classes was intended to address this issue, but the problem of attendance meant this is not a useful alternative.

One area to work on is encouraging students to develop good time management and access the service as early as possible, thus minimising a build up of students at hand-in times. Some students tend to wait until the last minute before making an appointment and consequently, at busy times, there are no appointments available. However, the pattern of attendance shows that even at traditionally quieter times such as the beginning of terms there is a high demand for appointments.

A significant number of students have approached Language Support looking for what is essentially a proof-reading service, where minor errors in grammar, punctuation etc are corrected on an almost-completed piece of work. While it is understandable that students want to present work accurately, proof-reading work, often without the student present, is not a good use of the tutors' time. Language Support exists to facilitate students' language improvement; proof-reading is not a teaching activity. Language Support, therefore, should focus on working directly with students to help them to identify problem areas and then learn from them.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

A more integrated approach to Language Support within the college would benefit many international students. One-to-one Language Support tutorials are extremely popular, as they allow students to work on their specific needs in a confidential environment and we would certainly want these to continue. However, resources are limited and demand for these appointments consistently outstrips supply. The one to one service should continue with the policy of students being allowed to

make only one appointment at a time, in order to allow as many students as possible access to a service which is limited by the available staffing resources.

The English for Academic Purposes Course developed in conjunction with CVCS and Architecture has worked well during the year. Recommendations for future developments of the course are: continuation and expansion of the EAP course, ideally to include second year direct entrants; extension of the class time to one and a half hours and new placement testing procedures.

A similar course aimed at new students in all years and Schools would be a desirable future development. An integrated English language programme at eca, taught by language support staff, would allow more students to access the help they need. This would not in any sense be in competition with students' core programmes, but would facilitate their full participation in student life. Feedback from students on the Language Support classes held in collaboration with CVCS and Architecture was overwhelmingly positive and including a language component within courses gives new students at least a basic grounding in academic English.

We would therefore recommend that around one and a half hours per week is available on student timetables for all those who would benefit to attend (e.g. those without IELTS level 6.5) either

- an introductory course on academic English suitable for all new undergraduates (FYS, 2nd year direct entry, etc),
OR
- a more advanced course suitable for new postgraduates

These would not be credit-bearing, but could be accessed by students in addition to their credit-bearing courses.

As Language Support work is very often related to the written work required by CVCS, it has been very useful to liaise with CVCS tutors regarding classes and assessments and this should continue in the next session.

2005-06 sees the introduction of the joint programme between the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA) and eca/Glasgow School of Art. Students will study in Beijing for one year on an English-medium programme, which will also include English classes provided by Bell International. Students will then complete their degrees by studying in either Edinburgh or Glasgow for three years, starting in 2006, with between 35 and 42 students expected to join eca. Although the students will have to achieve a required IELTS score before coming to eca, it is anticipated that this group will continue to have Language Support needs. It will be important to liaise with both GSA and CAFA to gain as much information as possible about the English language aspects of the programme and in order to understand the likely needs of the students who will join eca in 2006-07. As it is proposed this programme will increase international student numbers by around 40 students it will be necessary to explore what additional resources will be required by Language Support.

As in previous years, the greatest difficulties have been experienced by students whose level of English is not high enough to allow them to participate fully in aspects of their studies (notably written work) or in Edinburgh student life. It is therefore recommended that an appropriate English language requirement is adhered to in the entry requirements for prospective students.

Language Support Tutors
August 2005

5.0 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ADVICE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

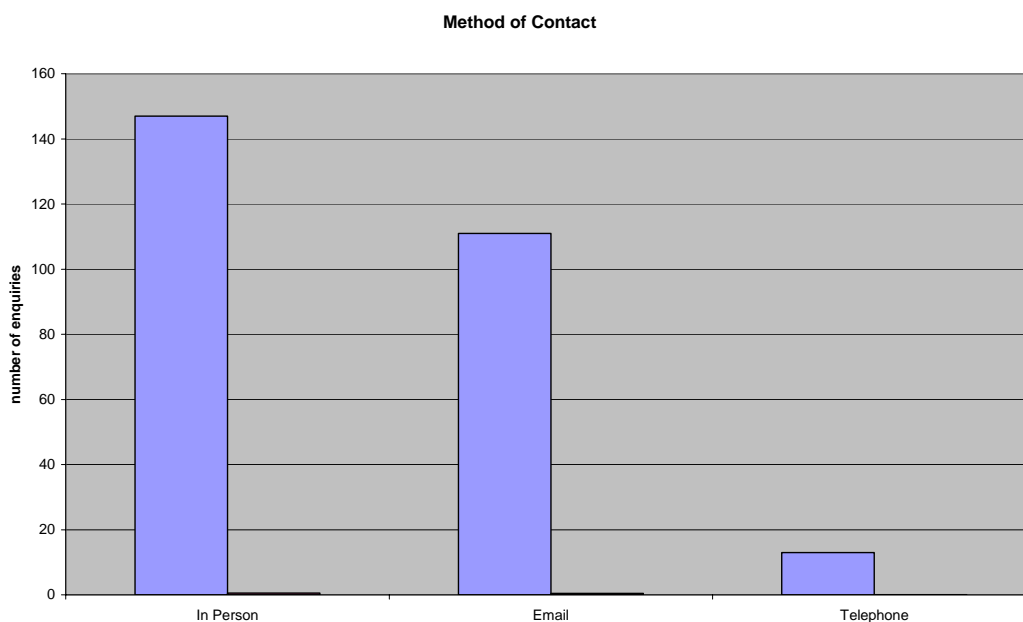
International Student Advice is a new service offered within Student Services, to respond to the needs of the increasing numbers of international students at eca. The remit of the Adviser is to deal with student queries on a wide range of issues, to organise induction and social events and to liaise with internal and external bodies regarding international student issues.

For the purposes of International Student Advice, the term 'international student' is understood as referring to ALL non-UK students, including EU students.

5.2 HOW THE SERVICE OPERATES

International Student Advice operates a drop-in system for enquiries four days each week for one to two hours. These times are advertised through student and staff email, and on posters throughout the college. Students can also contact the Adviser by email or by telephone. The service is also available to prospective students, who are included within the statistics recorded (please note that in the following analysis 'student' is used to refer to both current and prospective students unless otherwise stated).

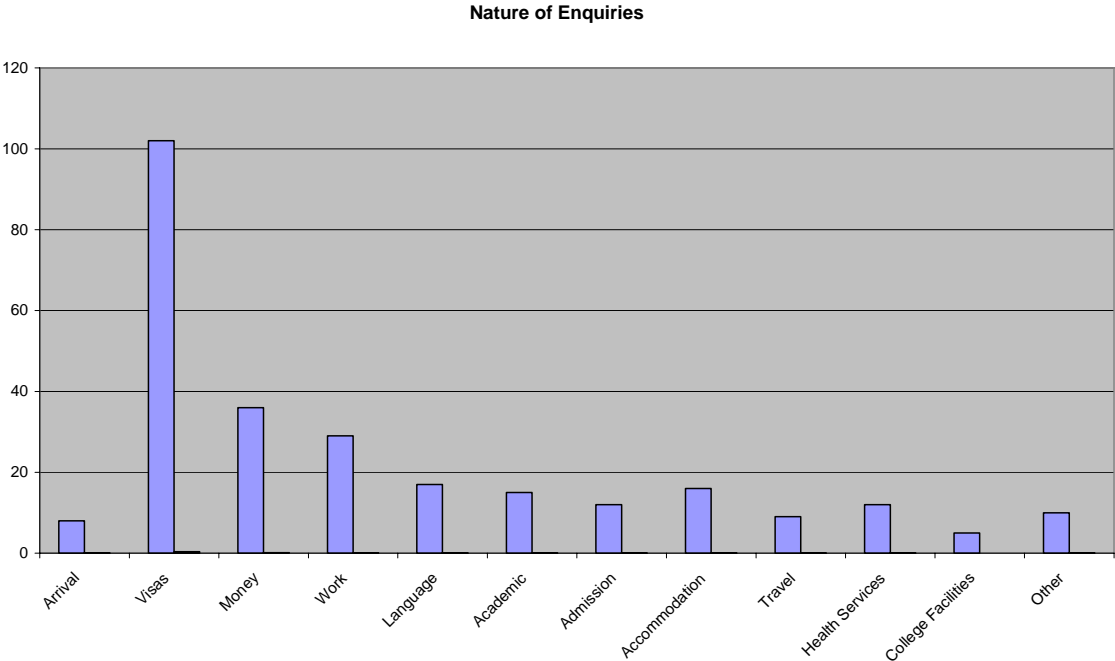
Unlike most areas within Student Services, detailed records of the students making enquiries are not recorded. This is partly because a high percentage of enquiries are received from prospective students, and partly to encourage students to 'drop-in' informally to receive advice, some of which may be on sensitive issues such as immigration. However, the date and nature of each enquiry are recorded.



More than 50% of enquiries were made by students in person at Student Services, with a further 41% received by email, and less than 5% by telephone. The low

level of telephone contacts may reflect a number of factors including: some students finding telephone communication difficult in English; the cost of international phone calls; limited hours of availability of the Adviser. The high level of enquiries made in person confirms the importance of having an Adviser on site at eca. Email is clearly particularly helpful for prospective students and having three methods through which advice can be sought seems a useful way for as many students as possible to access the service.

The graph below gives a breakdown of the nature of ISA enquiries.

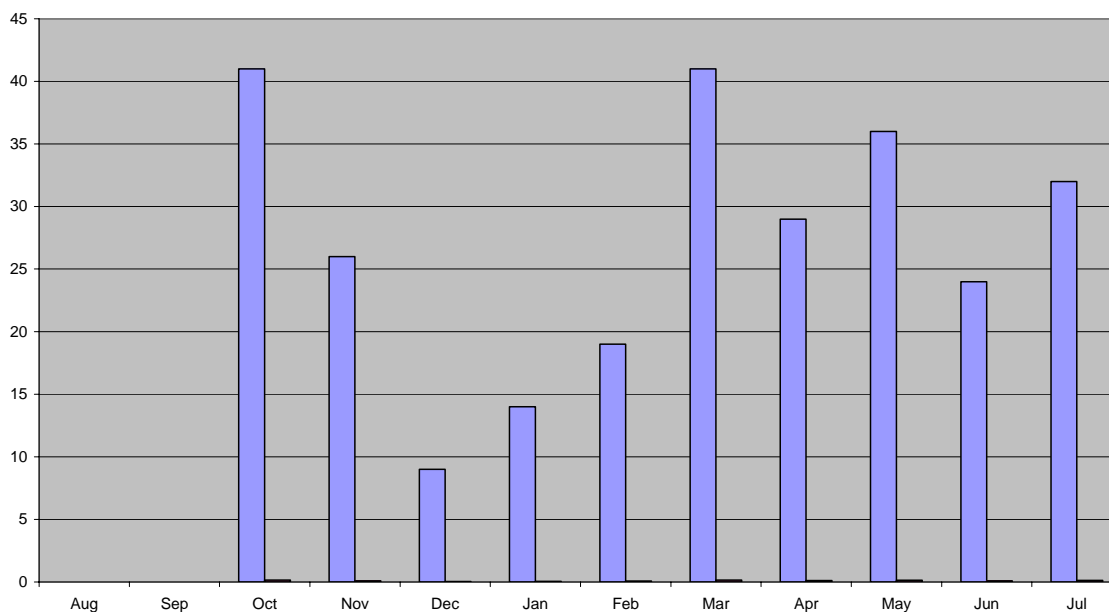


The biggest area of enquiry is clearly immigration and visas, with nearly 40% of total enquiries on this subject. The vast majority of these enquiries relate to the gaining of entry clearance for prospective students, and the extension of Leave to Remain in the UK for those already here. Money and work combine to account for a further 24% of enquiries. While the percentage of enquiries regarding arrival is small at less than 3%, it should be noted that International Student Advice was not available until October in session 2004-05; it is reasonable to expect that in the period August to September these enquiries will show a substantial increase.

The time spent on each enquiry varies enormously. Some, such as emails relating to admissions or accommodation, may require only a brief response from the Adviser and be forwarded to the college departments responsible for these areas. Others, particularly those concerning immigration, can take several hours at a time over a period of weeks.

As this is the first year that the service has been available, it is perhaps too early to evaluate the pattern of enquiries by month (see graph below), other than to note that the number of enquiries remains largely constant over holiday periods. October is also likely to be a month with a high number of enquiries, as students new to the college will be seeking advice, and many students are required to renew their visas at this time. Please note that this service did not commence until October therefore there are no statistics prior to this date.

Enquiries by Month



5.3 LIAISON WORK

While the core role of the Adviser is to offer advice to students, another key function is to liaise with relevant parties within and outwith the college. In session 2004-05 this has included participation in the International Advisory Group, the Induction Working Party and the working party on arrangements for the eca programme offered in conjunction with the Chinese Academy of Fine Art (CAFA). The Adviser also liaises on a regular basis with the International Marketing Officer, the Exchange Co-ordinator and the Admissions Officer. Outside of eca, the adviser also attends meetings of STRATOS, the organisation of International Student Advisers in Scotland. Two UKCOSA training workshops on immigration have also proved useful, both in terms of their very practical application and in building contacts.

One area in which liaison work has developed this year is in conjunction with the Scottish Executive's Fresh Talent Initiative (FTI) to encourage people to live and work in Scotland. The Adviser participated in discussions which led to eca involvement in two bids submitted to the FTI Challenge Fund for projects which enhance the international student experience. The first was co-ordinated with other institutions in the Edinburgh area and sought funding for a co-ordinated 'meet and greet' at Edinburgh airport for incoming students. The other focused on the provision of a database of work placements and was submitted by eca and Glasgow School of Art. While the results of this process will not be known until later in 2005, developing liaison with other institutions is an excellent way of using and attracting resources to enhance the international student experience.

5.4 INDUCTION AND SOCIAL EVENTS

A pre-arrival guide with information on, for example, visas, finances and orientation in Edinburgh, is sent to all international students. During the induction week of session 2004-05, an international student desk was set up in the

matriculation area. This was staffed as much as possible by the Adviser and the Exchange Co-ordinator. Students from outwith the UK were directed by Registry staff to the desk as they completed their registration. They were then able to meet Student Services staff and ask questions, collect any relevant information on language support, local places of worship, etc. A sign up sheet was also available for students to leave their email addresses if they chose to do so; this list was then used throughout the year by the International Student Adviser to give out information on events, etc.

An International Student Welcome event was held on the Friday of induction week, with drinks and snacks available in Albertina's (the canteen). This was publicised through posters, emails to staff, Student Services induction sessions and fliers at the international student desk at matriculation. Although the event was aimed primarily at new international students, all students, including home students, were invited. The event was very successful and well-attended. Further events held throughout the year were also successful, including a Scottish dancing evening in conjunction with VL Scotland and other Edinburgh-based students; a Welcome event for new Exchange students; an International Food party.

5.5 CHALLENGES

An initial challenge was disseminating information about the new post so that both staff and students were aware of the resources offered. The main methods used to publicise both International Student Advice and events were induction, email and posters within the college. It is not certain that all staff and students are fully informed about this role and so it will be necessary to continue publicising the service. Currently students may be uncertain about where to find information on particular issues and the provision of information leaflets and web links on the portal need to be developed further.

Induction at eca is currently provided largely by individual Schools. While it is clearly ideal for international students to receive orientation along with their peers, there has not been any induction which caters to the specific needs of international students and this should be offered in addition to the induction currently delivered. As the ELIR report on eca states: 'The College is aware of the need to improve its induction arrangements for international students and this will be particularly important, given its stated intention of increasing its overseas recruitment.'¹

Although the international social events offered in 2004-05 were successful, they were difficult to plan in advance as there was no budget allocated for the service. It would have been helpful to produce a calendar of events in good time so that students and staff were fully aware of the social programme.

Another area which requires to be addressed is the integration of international with home students. Some students, particularly those who do not experience language difficulties, experience no problem in this regard, but others may find it difficult to participate fully in student life with their peers. The social events held during 2004-05 have given international students the chance to meet and get to

¹ *Enhancement-Led Institutional Review: Edinburgh College of Art* (March 2005), <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/institutional/Edinburgh05/Edinburgh05.pdf>, p. 15.

know each other, but although all eca students are invited, very few home students attend.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS

As this is the first year that the post of International Student Adviser has existed at eca, 2004-05 was an opportunity to see more clearly what the needs of international students were and to address how they can most effectively be met. The college aims to increase international student numbers over the next few years and the agreement with CAFA will further add to the international student presence. In order to allow the full participation of international students in eca life, which will benefit staff, international and home students alike, it is important to ensure the appropriate level of support is available.

Having a designated point of contact for international students was clearly useful. As this is a part-time post, ensuring the adviser is available on different days throughout the week allows students to access the service more effectively, which is particularly important given the complexity of student timetables. The number of student enquiries about immigration matters confirmed the importance of having a member of staff qualified to give visa advice within the college. It is recommended that the drop-in sessions for International Student Advice continue to operate in this way for session 2005-06.

The participation of the Adviser in eca working parties helps to keep the profile of international issues high within the college and should be continued. Similarly, it has been useful, particularly as this is a new post, to participate in UKCOSA training sessions and meetings with other Advisers. The rapidly-changing nature of many aspects of the job, most notably visa advice and work opportunities for overseas students, make participation in a wider Advisers' network especially desirable.

In 2005-06, for the first time, airport meetings are being offered to new international students who arrive during a designated period before matriculation. In future it is hoped to co-ordinate this 'meet and greet' activity with other Edinburgh HE institutions.

The induction activities that were offered – the international desk at matriculation, general Student Services induction and welcome drinks – were successful and it is recommended that these are repeated. The Induction Working Party aims to offer a more co-ordinated induction process for all students and this will allow more events suitable for international students to be timetabled within the induction period. These will include induction sessions on UK student life (cultural factors and practical matters such as opening a bank account). It is vital that the move towards a fuller and more co-ordinated induction process for students that has already begun is continued in future years.

The development of the student portal should be a useful resource in publicising both the support resources available and events. Information on areas of interest to international students will need to be added and updated as required.

A clear programme of international student social events (budgeted for in advance) would allow them to be publicised more effectively. The sign-up sheet at matriculation will continue to be a useful means of contacting international students; requiring students to check their college emails will also be helpful. Increasing liaison with the Student Union could help with the integration of home and international students at social events.

International Student Adviser
September 2005

6.0 STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

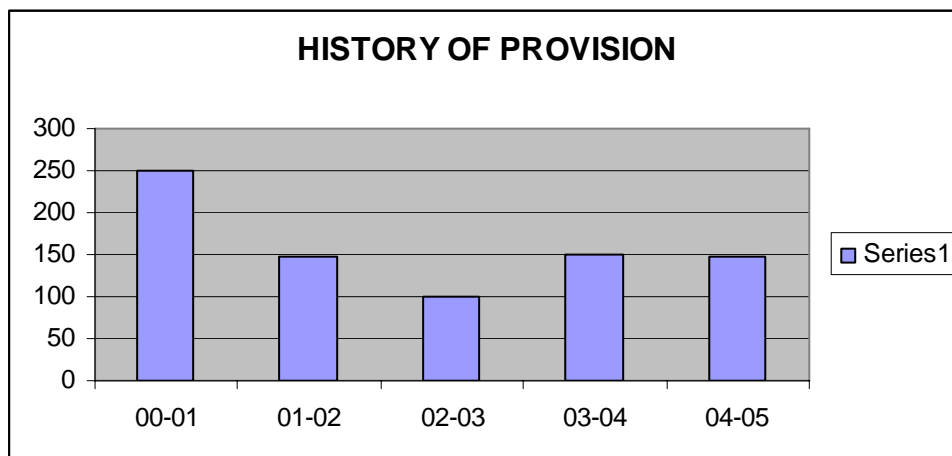
6.1 INTRODUCTION

The following is a report on the Accommodation Service offered to students through Student Services at Edinburgh College of Art. The college offers a limited number of spaces in halls of residence to new students which are leased through the University of Edinburgh but the majority of our students continue to rent flats in the private sector and advice and assistance is offered to these students in their search for private accommodation.

6.2 UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

This session was the second year in which all student accommodation in halls of residence was formally available through the University of Edinburgh (UoE). After negotiations in 2003-04 the UoE offered eca **148 bed-spaces** for the 2004-05 session, to be allocated within Sciennes 1, in 3 adjacent stairs. This allowed all eca students to be accommodated together. Sciennes is a self-catered block of halls located within 15 minutes walk from the college.

The chart below shows the provision of accommodation at eca over the past five years.



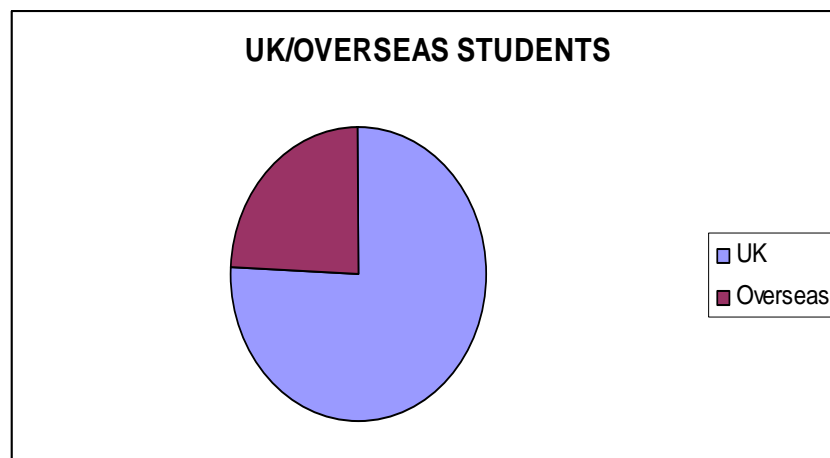
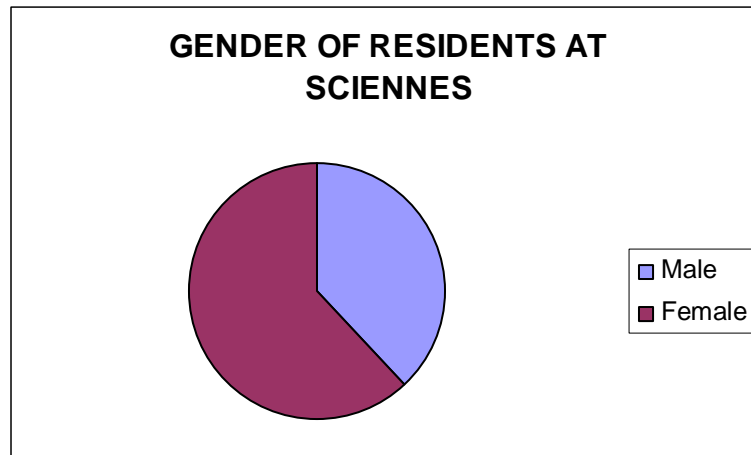
Edinburgh University charged a management fee of _____ for their services, which included processing all applications, allocating spaces, the daily management of Sciennes throughout the year and general advice on leasing property privately.

While calculating this year's rent to be charged to our students it was discovered that a miscalculation had been made by the Finance Department at eca in the rent charged to students staying in Sciennes during 2003-04 and in June 2005 Student Services organised appropriate refunds to be paid to these students.

6.2.1 STATISTICS

A request for detailed statistics was made to the UoE this year but we were informed that it was impossible to obtain any useful information from their current computer system.

You will see from the chart below that there were approximately twice as many female students as male students applying for halls, which reflects the proportion of male/female students attending the college. You will also note that a quarter of places are taken up by our international sector which is a higher percentage than International students in the whole student population (15%).



6.2.2 ALLOCATIONS

The allocation of places took place following the 23rd August 2004 deadline when "A" level results had been notified to the students and the Conditions met forms had been returned to UoE. This gave all our students an equal chance of being offered accommodation.

After the initial allocation of places students were notified of their place by post; with overseas students also being e-mailed by UoE. Students who were not offered a place were sent a letter giving them alternative options for accommodation. These were all students who were not in one of the priority groups.

At the end of the allocation process, with some students not taking up places, we were left with quite a few unfilled bed-spaces which continued to be unfilled all session. This meant that our void rate was **almost 8%**, a much higher figure than the **predicted 3%**.

This resulted in the confirmation of places offered being delayed with the subsequent raised anxiety for eca students. There were also technical difficulties at the University of Edinburgh so the contracts were also late going out and many of our overseas students had already left home to come to Edinburgh at that stage.

A new computer system has now been installed at the UoE which will hopefully eliminate some of these problems.

6.2.3 Priority Groups

Historically demand for accommodation has out-stripped supply and therefore priority has always been given to students who were either from overseas or who were under the age of 19 as at 1st October on the year of intake.

6.3 ACCOMMODATION PACKS

Accommodation packs were prepared in April 2004 by the Accommodation Administrator and sent out by Registry. For home students these were sent out after the student had accepted their place and for overseas students with their offer letters.

The packs included: Accommodation Letter; Application Form for Sciennes; Information Sheet on Sciennes; Conditions Met form; Mailing List Form; Short Term Accommodation List; Guide to Student Services; UNITE booklet and Acknowledgement Postcard

6.4 MAILING SCHEME

This scheme is organised annually to assist new students looking for accommodation in the private sector. We collate students' names with contact telephone numbers and e-mail addresses to enable them to contact each other to form groups to go looking for flats. These lists were circulated regularly together with lists of accommodation available from our accommodation notice board.

6.5 "UNITE"

This is a private sector company specialising in accommodation for students. Although we did not have a formal arrangement for our students this year we have advertised their accommodation at James Craig Walk in the Accommodation Packs.

6.6 STUDENT EVALUATION

As part of our on-going quality assurance procedures we issued questionnaires to the students at Sciennes via the Residents Assistants. There was not a satisfactory return on these mainly because the students were also filling a 30-page accommodation questionnaire for the University of Edinburgh, however the results were as follows:

What was the best thing you found about living in Sciennes?

"I learnt how to deal with severe illness from the unhygienic living standards"

"Social side for a start. Bills paid for us."

"Good location"

"No bills, location, meeting people"

"I learnt to strive in deprivation"

What was the worst thing you found about living in Sciennes?

"Rent, the people, the noise, the smells, the illness, the general look of the place (grubby)"

"No internet, no sofa and noise in the middle of the night. Far too expensive."

"Cramped rooms – noise"

"Nobody really cares"

6.7 OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-06

- Develop new student accommodation in Lady Lawson Street through UNITE
- Develop interactive accommodation website with downloadable application forms
- Develop accommodation section on student portal
- Revise agreement with University of Edinburgh
- Develop statistical base
- Develop quality enhancement procedures

Accommodation Officer
August 2005

7.0 SOCRATES/ERASMUS AND INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the decision by senior management in 2003/4 to manage the Erasmus and International exchange programmes centrally in Student Services, the Exchange Co-ordinator has put in place new procedures, on a trial basis, to streamline the process and to clarify the roles and responsibilities within the college.

The feedback from the Schools on the new process has been positive and our partner institutions have stated that they find it beneficial to deal with one main contact in the college rather than six different departments. The Exchange Co-ordinator is now the main contact for partner institutions, incoming and outgoing exchange students and for staff interested in setting up exchange networks or wanting to go on staff exchange. The Exchange Co-ordinator continues to work closely with the Schools who in turn hold responsibility for the selection of incoming and outgoing students. The preparation of learning agreements also lies with the academic departments but exchange co-ordination is now channelled through the Exchange Co-ordinator. This allows for a more collegiate approach to assuring consistency and equal opportunities.

The Centre for Visual and Cultural Studies have had an important input to this year's application process for Art & Design students assessing whether the students chosen for exchange would be likely to be able to cope with the written element of the programme while abroad.

7.2 ERASMUS/SOCRATES

7.2.1 Background

In March 2004 the college was informed by Brussels that our application for the Erasmus University Charter had not been successful and we could therefore not participate in the Socrates/Erasmus programme. The College was at that time involved in various projects across Europe including the development of a new joint master's course and the college made the decision to re-apply for the Charter for 2005-06.

7.2.2 Application For Erasmus University Charter

The Exchange Co-ordinator carried out extensive research into the Erasmus programme and interviewed staff in Schools, Registry, Marketing and Finance Departments, discussed exchanges with the Student President, attended Erasmus workshops and conferences, visited the Institutional Co-ordinators in the University of Edinburgh and Glasgow School of Art to look at best practice and visited the UK Socrates/Erasmus Council Headquarters in Canterbury to meet with the UK Directors and Finance staff. A report was submitted to Senior Management at the end of this review process.

In September/October the European Policy Statement was developed by senior academics, in conjunction with the Co-ordinator and the Head of Student Services, this being the main component of the application for the Erasmus University Charter. The new application was submitted to Brussels on 1 November 2004 as required.

To ensure that the college was complying with the Erasmus University Charter and the Erasmus Student Charter, the Exchange Co-ordinator ran seminars for academic and administrative staff involved in exchanges to discuss the Charter, procedures, roles and responsibilities. Draft procedures were produced and agreed.

In March 2005 we heard that the College had been awarded the Erasmus University Charter for 2005-06 – 2006-07.

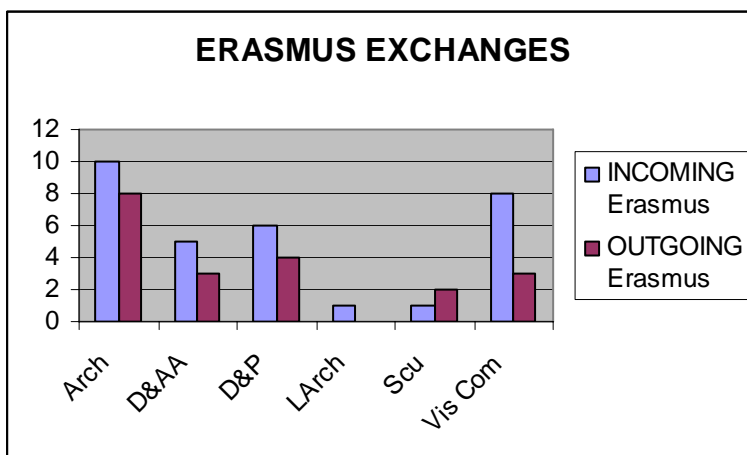
7.2.3 Application to the UK Socrates/Erasmus Council

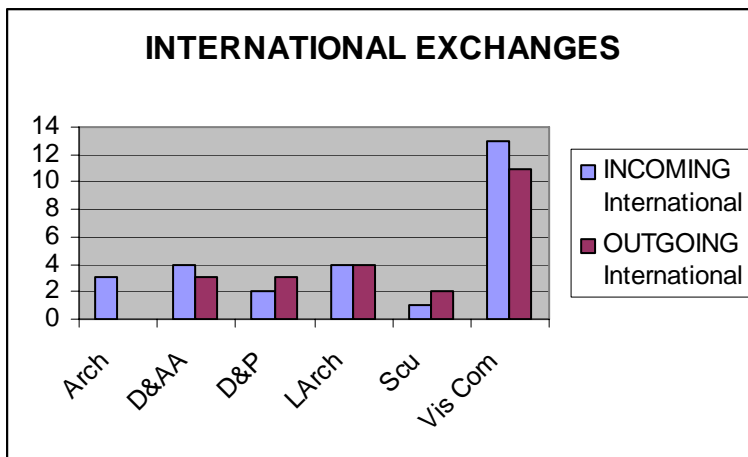
In April the College applied to UKSEC for student/staff mobility and organisational funds based on projected numbers provided by the Schools. We are planning to send approximately **40 students on Erasmus exchange in 2005/6** but it was difficult to predict exact numbers at an early stage. It appears that in some Schools there are many more students wanting to go to Australia and the USA rather than to Europe and we will need to look at this issue. We think it is probably a question of language and lack of confidence in going to a non-English speaking country and in future we are hoping to encourage more students to take advantage of free language courses prior to the start of the exchange period.

The Organisation of Mobility (OM) money which can be used to support student/staff mobility in the way of promotional materials, events, preparatory and monitoring visits, administration visits etc. is based on these predicted numbers and will give us an initial fund of approximately **£4,000**. These funds will be placed in our Erasmus bank account by UKSEC, following the interim report in January 2006, when numbers are firmed up.

7.3 STUDENT EXCHANGES IN 2004-05

To maintain our links with our European partners during this period the College agreed to fund eca exchange students to an equivalent “Erasmus” amount. **20 eca students were funded on this basis during 2004-05** and from the tables below you will see that the number of incoming students is substantially higher than the outgoing and, although this was an unusual year, it is something we hope to balance in future.

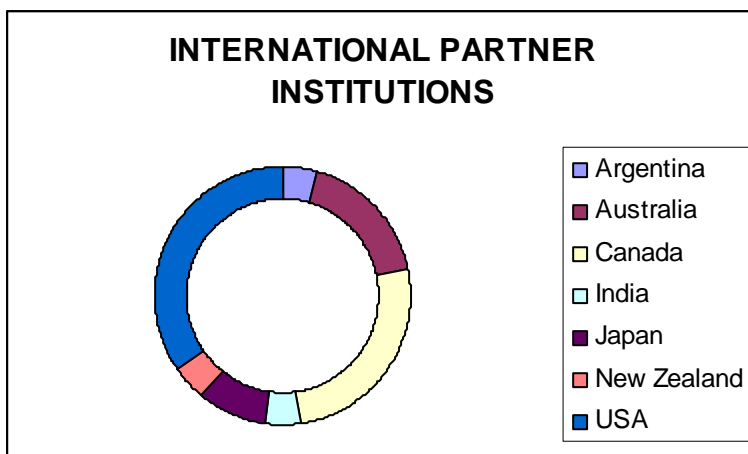
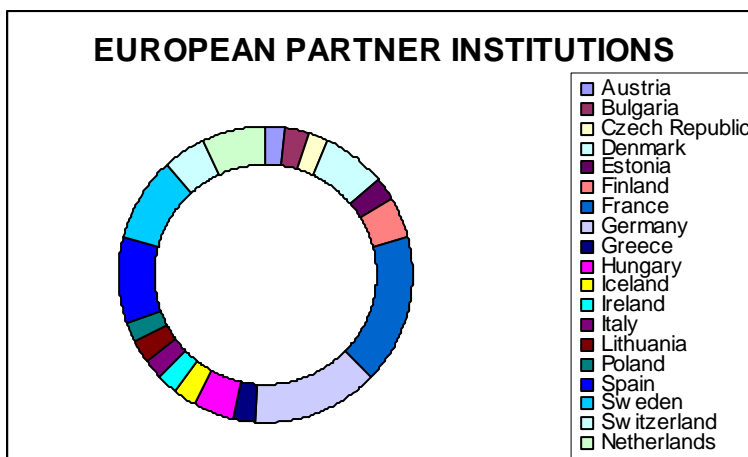




7.4 BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

In February the Exchange Group, which comprises the School Academics/Administrators involved in exchanges plus the Exchange Co-ordinator and the Acting “Erasmus Academic Champion”, carried out a review of all existing Bilateral Agreements to decide on a future strategy and to decide if Schools wanted to continue, amend or terminate existing agreements. Following this process new bilateral agreements for 2005-06 were drawn up, signed by the Principal, and sent out to all our partner institutions for signature.

The following charts indicate the number of partner institutions in each country.



7.5 PREPARATORY VISITS

It was decided at this meeting that, where possible, before a new agreement is set up, a preparatory visit should be made to any new institution by an academic to ensure that they match our criteria in accordance with the QAA Code of Practice. The Co-ordinator asked Heads of School to submit proposals to enable a schedule of preparatory visits to be prepared and costed. A small amount of funding will be available for preparatory/monitoring visits through the Erasmus OM money.

7.6 LEARNING AGREEMENTS AND TRANSCRIPTS

In February 2005 the Exchange Group met to discuss the implications of Learning Agreements, Transcripts and Credits. Learning Agreements for outgoing students are required under the Erasmus Charter and should be signed by the departmental academic staff, the student and the host university before the student goes on exchange, giving details of the courses to be taken and credits awarded. In some Schools these have been done on an informal basis but it has not been consistent across the college. The meeting agreed that Learning Agreements would be completed for 2005-06 for both Erasmus and International Exchanges. It was agreed that if it was not possible to firm up courses before the students went then the student would be required to inform the college as soon as possible after arrival at the host institution.

It was also agreed at this meeting that transcripts would be issued to incoming exchange students and a system to make this possible is currently under discussion with Registry.

7.7 RESOURCE BASE

The Co-ordinator has created a resource base located in Student Services with prospectuses and application information for our partner institutions. This resource will be useful for students to browse through when planning their studies abroad and will be developed further during 2005-06.

7.8 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

In February/March Information Sessions were held to promote the 2005-06 Erasmus and International exchanges. These were advertised on School Notice Boards, the Student Portal and by student e-mail. They were well attended and approximately **90 Application Packs** were handed out.

Six former Erasmus exchange students from Design & Applied Arts, Visual Communication and Drawing & Painting gave short talks/slide shows about their exchange experiences which were very much appreciated. The Head of Design & Applied Arts was a great support and gave a short talk about his experiences in Europe.

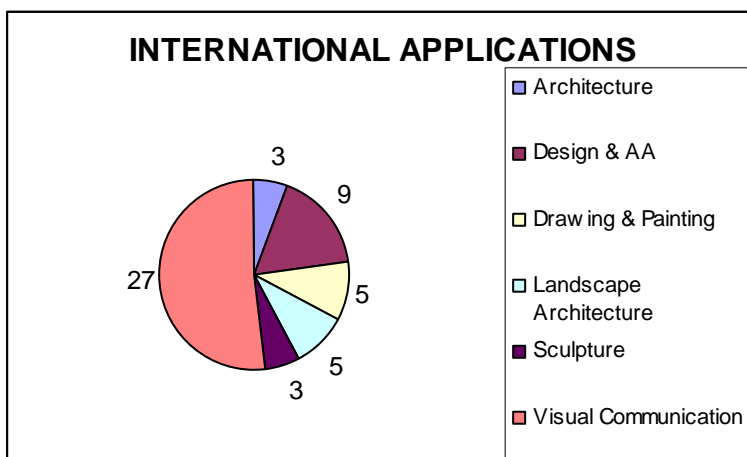
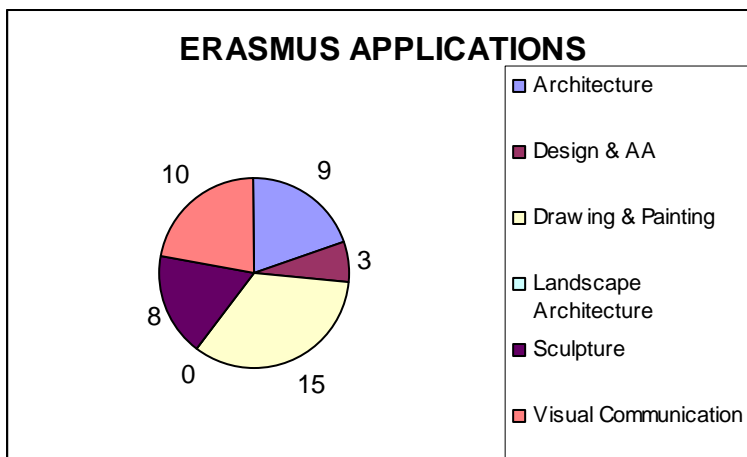
The Information Sessions will be brought forward next session to January 2006 to accommodate the Architecture and Landscape Architecture application deadlines for their institutions which are in early February/March.

The Erasmus Website was developed during 2004-05 and further work will be carried out here to incorporate downloadable application forms and application guidelines.

7.9 APPLICATIONS

New Internal Application Forms were produced for use by all Schools and these are now processed centrally. We received a total of **97 applications for Erasmus and International Exchanges** as shown below. There was a notable difference in choice of destination from School to School with Drawing & Painting and Sculpture mainly opting for European destinations while in the School of Visual Communication there was a big demand for places in the USA, Canada and Australia. In the School of Drawing & Painting any exchange must be directly reciprocal mainly because of studio space but in the School of Visual Communication, Design & Applied Arts, Architecture and Landscape places are matched up over a two or three year period. Although all Schools would acknowledge the benefits of having exchange students in their departments it is important that the college does not take in more students overall than we have going out as this is not cost effective in teaching terms and this situation will be closely monitored over the next couple of years.

Applications from the Schools of Architecture and Landscape Architecture were processed during February and March for exchanges starting in August/September. Exchanges in Art & Design normally take place in Term 2 and applications are processed from July - September as the deadlines for these institutions are mostly October.



7.10 PRE-DEPARTURE MEETINGS

It is very important that students know what their responsibilities and rights are prior to the exchange and pre-departure meetings were held in June for the Architecture students before leaving for exchange in September with Academic staff and the Exchange Co-ordinator. Information packs were distributed which included a schedule of return dates for forms plus contact details of the Co-ordinator at the host institution. Further pre-departure meetings will be held at the end of November for students going out on exchange in Term 2.

One area which the college requires to develop is a process to manage the return of students from exchange to ensure that they are fitting back into their programme/department without any unnecessary stress following their period abroad.

7.11 ERASMUS/INTERNATIONAL FORMS

It is essential that all the paperwork required by the UK Erasmus Council is completed by the students and new eca forms have been produced for this purpose including a Student Release Form; Erasmus Grant Application Form; Student Mobility Contract; Confirmation of Arrival; Learning Agreement; Receipt of Student Grant; Student Report Form and Evaluation Questionnaire.

It was agreed that we would mirror the Erasmus forms for the International Exchanges and a Student Release Form, Confirmation of Arrival Form, Learning Agreement and Evaluation Questionnaire were distributed to Architecture and Landscape Architecture students in July for international exchanges starting in September.

Copies of all completed forms relating to exchanges will be returned to the Exchange Co-ordinator and kept in Student Services for audit purposes. Copies of the Learning Agreements will also be lodged in the student file in Registry.

7.12 DATABASE

We are in the process of developing a new database which will be linked to the SITS records system which will allow for easy reporting to UKSEC and College Management on student/staff mobility. In the meantime all information is kept on a database in Student Services to enable tracking of applications.

7.13 WELCOME AND INDUCTION

It was important to welcome the incoming exchange students to the college and in September an informal welcome party was organised by the International Student Adviser for international and exchange students in September. This was very well attended and allowed our international and exchange students to make contact with one another. We are planning to organise more frequent informal meetings next session and hope to encourage former eca exchange students to join this group.

In January Welcome/Induction events took place for Term 2 incoming exchange students with presentations on Health & Safety, Security, Registry and Student Services followed by wine and snacks. Welcome packs were prepared for all incoming exchange students.

In February Student Services held an extremely successful International Food Evening where international and exchange students brought food from their own countries. It was great fun.

7.14 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Evaluation questionnaires were sent out to all incoming exchange students and eca outgoing exchange students to gauge strengths and weaknesses of the exchange programme and to identify where improvements could be made. There was a **30% return** from the eca students and from the comments below you will see that the majority of students felt that their exchange was a very worthwhile or even life changing experience. The Exchange Co-ordinator also met with students on their return to obtain oral feedback.

Queensland: ***“very valuable experience, but I am not sure the work was as beneficial to me as it could have been”***

British Columbia: ***“very, very, very interesting and valuable! I very much enjoyed it and learned a lot.”***

Finland: ***“reminds you of what the world has to offer and most things are possible”***

Strasbourg: ***“excellent way of experiencing life abroad if all works well”***

Stuttgart: ***“I found it hard but fun and exciting. I’ve never learnt so much in so short a time!”***

Dublin: ***“a very useful academic and confidence building exercise for me personally”***

Sweden: ***“good experience overall, but disappointed that host institution didn’t inform me before I left that their professor in Glass just left!”***

Switzerland: ***“good experience – important to see new and different ways of working. Good opportunity to meet new and interesting people”***

Arizona: ***“was possibly the best experience of my life. Has definitely helped my work and my attitude towards work”***

Maryland: ***“it was an amazing experience – I wish I could have stayed”***

Alfred: ***“it literally changed my life”***

7.15 OBJECTIVES FOR 2005-06

- Develop a framework to assist staff to go on teaching exchange
- Benchmark with other European and UK institutions
- Develop eca Website and Student Portal
- Set up a group for former and new Exchange Students

- Set up system for managing international exchanges to mirror Erasmus system
- Formalise re-integration session for returning students
- Introduce ECTS (European Credit Transfer System)

Exchange Co-Coordinator
August 2005

8.0 EMPLOYABILITY AND ENTERPRISE

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This session saw the establishment of an Employability Centre at Edinburgh College of Art, with the appointment of an Employability Adviser,

The Employability Adviser aims to support students and recent graduates, up to two years beyond graduation, in all aspects of their career planning. Prospective students have also used the service.

This involves helping students from year 1 onwards to understand the importance of enhancing their employability through developing skills and gaining experience in order to improve their career prospects.

Information, advice and guidance is also provided on job sectors, work opportunities, self employment and on making applications to support career development plans.

The Employability Adviser aims to achieve this in a variety of ways, including:

- 1 Offering impartial and confidential guidance interviews;
- 2 Provision of information which is tailored to student and graduate needs. Paper based information is held in the Employability Centre and web based information is provided through the eca Student Portal;
- 3 Arranging talks/workshops with external agencies on topics designed to inform career planning;
- 4 Working with Schools to provide career planning interventions at appropriate stages of courses and to develop and maintain personal development planning resources;
- 5 Maintaining contact with external agencies to keep up to date with developments in graduate employment, self employment and other work experience activities and to market the skills and qualities of the College's students and graduates.

8.2 MARKETING OF THE SERVICE

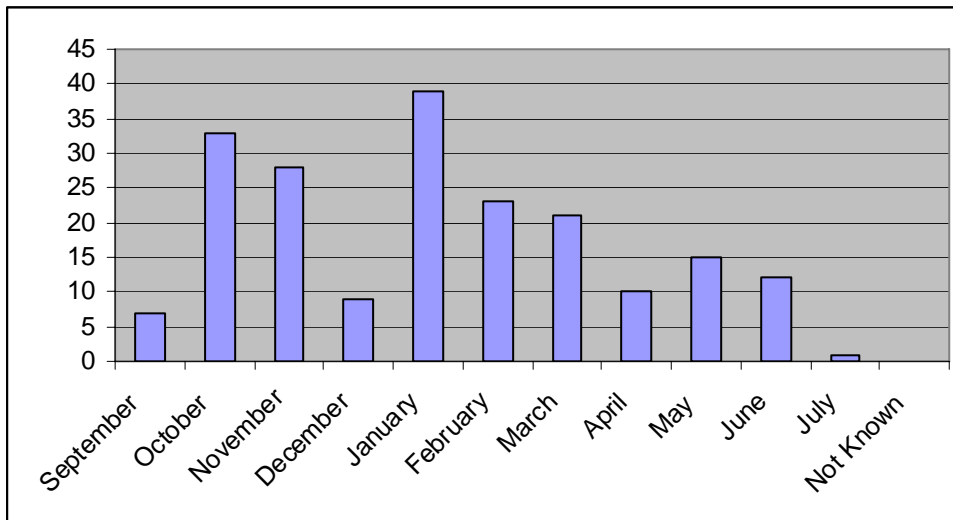
Year-round marketing of the services is important to ensure students are aware of the service and of the events, deadlines, opportunities etc. A mixed-media approach has been taken in an attempt to reach as many students as possible. The lack of a centrally positioned large noticeboard to advertise events and services presented a communication problem and led to an over-reliance on email, which is by no means used by all students. The introduction of the Student Portal may help alleviate this, however, a physical noticeboard, where key information can be posted, would also be useful, particularly to promote vacancies and events.

Talks were given during induction week to new students. Posters were sent to School offices for noticeboards. Students were emailed regularly with notification of services, events etc. Staff were emailed details of services.

8.3 STUDENT DEMAND ON THE SERVICE

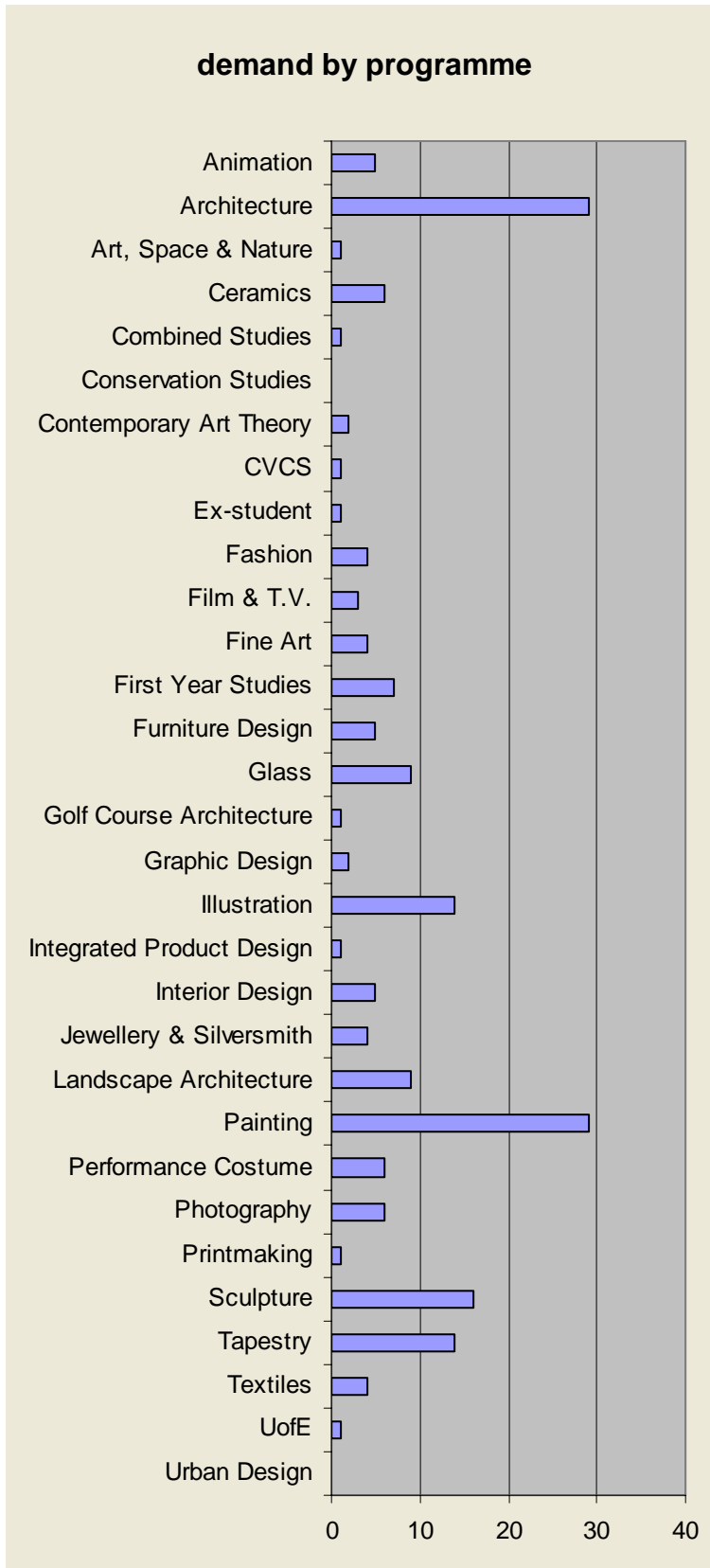
- 1 166 Appointments offered of which 147 were attended
- 2 Drop in sessions were offered almost every day
- 3 201 students registered with the Employability Service and attended careers guidance appointments with over 90 returning for additional meetings
- 4 In addition, a number of students and graduates (estimated at 25) made contact for advice by email and telephone only
- 5 All years are represented from 1st to PhD, also graduates and prospective students
- 6 2004 graduates were mailed in November 2004 with (Destinations of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) questionnaire) to inform them of service, also graduates were directed by Registry, as result of DLHE telephone calls.

8.3.1 Month Registered



First points of contact are spread throughout the year, with peaks in October and January. 64 male and 137 female students registered.

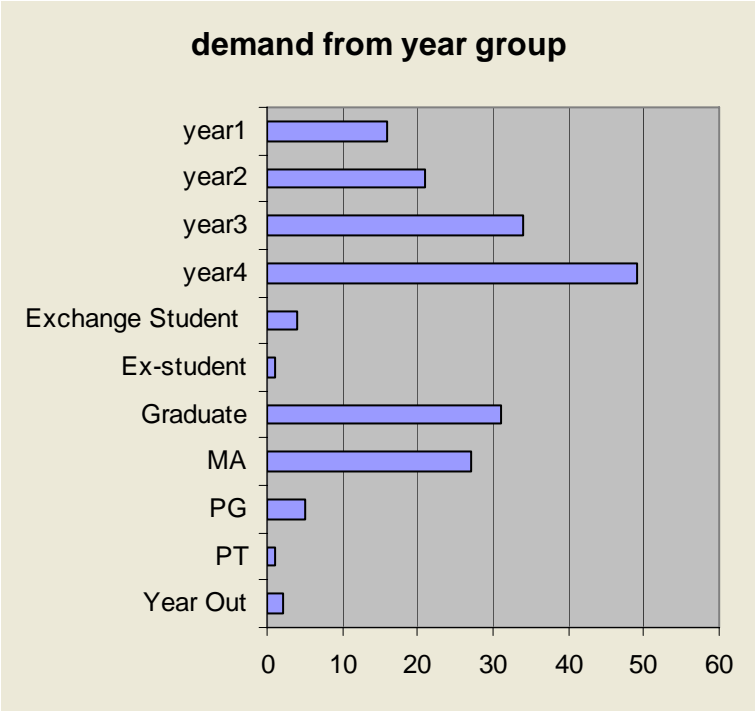
8.3.2 By Course:



Some clusters of clients, such as Architecture and Sculpture students, can be explained by follow up interviews following class-based application workshops. Anecdotal evidence points to word of mouth marketing within class groups also

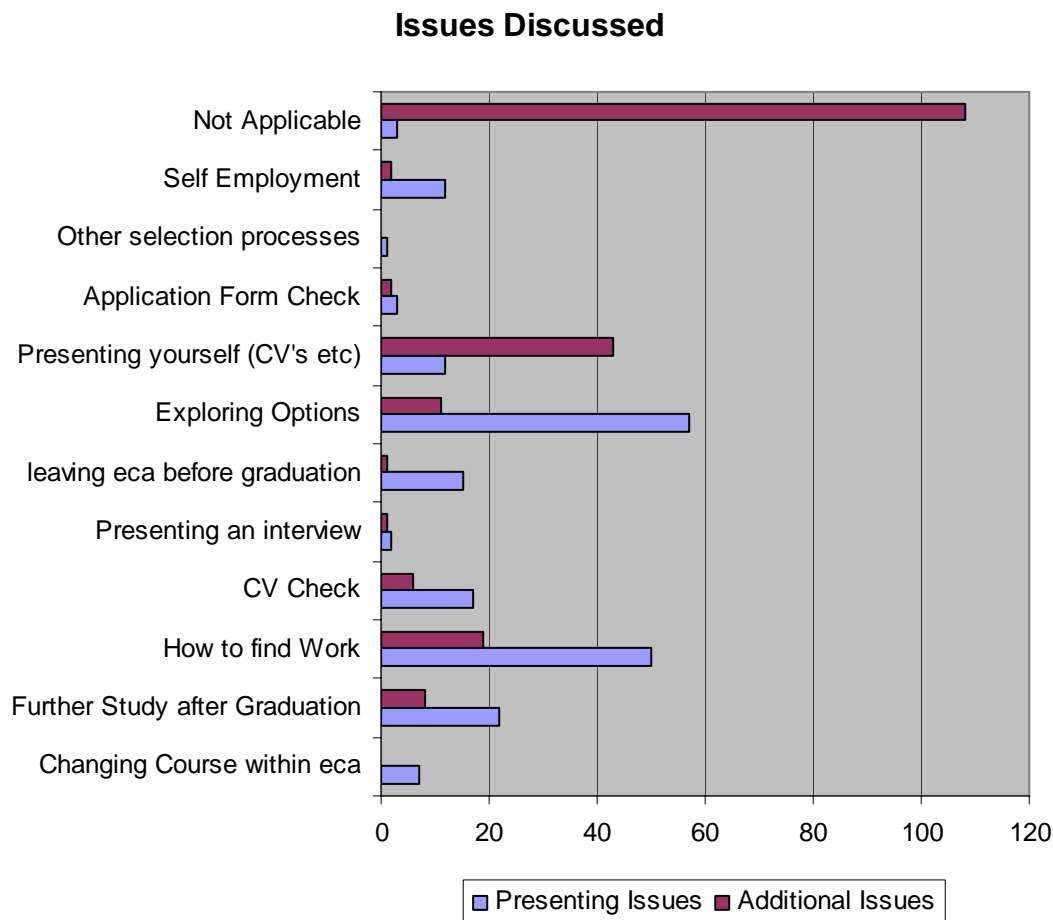
taking place. No talks took place in Drawing and Painting, yet students from this school form one of the largest groups.

8.3.3 By year of study:



While year 4 students formed the largest single year group, there is an encouraging spread of year groups represented.

8.3.4 Issues Discussed



Students often present multiple issues for discussion and the two main issues were recorded.

Exploring Options, How to Find Work and Presenting yourself (writing CVs etc) were the most popular issues presented. Significant issues were also Further Study queries and also Leaving eca before Graduation.

Discussions with students who are considering changing course, or leaving the college are particularly important ones and the student is often in a state of crisis. Referral to counselling staff was made when required and indeed, some of these students had accessed counselling support initially and were referred on for a discussion about their study and career options.

8.4 CAREERS WORKSHOPS

The following workshops were organised and held during the session:

- 1 A Career in Teaching, Oct 04, Tony Gemmell, Moray House PGCE Co-ordinator (45 students attended)

- 2 February 2005 talks, by Employability Adviser:
 - i. Graduate in 2005...What Next? (40 students attended)

- ii. Work Experience in Summer 2005 (35+ students attended)
 - iii. Create your CV (30+ students attended)
 - iv. Preparing for Interview (9 students attended)
- 3 Promotion of Dare to be Digital event and competition, Feb 05
 - 4 What Next? talk for finalists, June 05 (4 attended – timing turned out not to be convenient, although talk was set up in response to requests by Drawing and Painting finalists)
 - 5 Working in Scotland – June 05 event for international students, co-delivered with International Student Adviser, to inform them about application process for the Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme and about job search strategies. (25+ attended)

8.5 TALKS TO SCHOOLS/COURSES

- 1 Sculpture finalists, Nov 04
- 2 First Year Studies, Subject choice event, Feb 05
- 3 Year 3 + 5 Landscape Architects, preparation for making applications, March 05
- 4 3rd year Architects, preparation for making applications, March 05

8.6 EMPLOYABILITY AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (PDP) WITHIN eca

The Employability Steering Group was established by the Vice Principal in March 2005 to consider developments College-wide

The Employability Adviser is developing a model for PDP which can be adapted by individual departments to tailor to their own students' experience and requirements.

A pilot is being set up with Landscape Architecture to introduce PDP to year 1 and 3 students in session 2005-06.

The Employability Adviser is developing pilot PDP materials to be introduced to all First Year students in 2005-06.

The Employability Adviser has researched various mapping and audit tools and will establish the most appropriate approach for eca following discussion with the Employability Steering Group.

Staff Development workshops are planned for September 2005 on the following topics: Employability and PDP; Learning Styles; Group Work.

8.7 EXTERNAL LIAISON

8.7.1 Scottish Institute for Enterprise (SIE)

- 1 SIE's remit is now extended to cover all disciplines (was previously science, engineering & technology only)
- 2 Employability Adviser is the institutional contact on behalf of eca
- 3 3 teams of eca students were fast-tracked to final stages of SIE Business Plan competition with prospect of £15,000 prize and attended Enterprise Skills

weekend in Feb 05. One team achieved 5th place in the competition, out of 1100+ entries.

- 4 SIE have awarded £9,600 to employ 2 student interns, together with a marketing budget of £2000 to support the promotion of enterprise opportunities to students at eca, via SIE Interns. 2 Interns recruited to work during June and July 2005 and session 2005-06.
- 5 Access to the SIE's Patent Fund has now been established and a briefing by a patent attorney from Marks & Clerk to the Employability Adviser and the two Enterprise Interns took place in July 2005. Students can be referred to Marks & Clerk by the Employability Adviser for advice on patent filing, design and trade mark registration. Marks & Clerk have also offered to provide information sessions for eca students and the Enterprise Interns plan to organise an event for this purpose.

8.7.2 Cultural Enterprise Office (CEO)

Contact has been established with Fiona Pilgrim, Professional Development Adviser, CEO and agreement to publicise appropriate events to students and to deliver an information session for students. Promoted artists' networking events, jointly run by CEO and a-n magazine to students throughout the session.

CEO are planning to be more involved with eca in the future and Fiona Pilgrim will be involved in the Enterprise Interns' first event for students in October 2005.

8.7.3 PDP in HE In Scotland Group

The Employability Adviser is a member of this group which was established 8 years ago by interested parties from all HEIs in Scotland. Its work this session included:

- 1 Involved in compiling response to Effective Learning Framework consultation on PDP
- 2 Maintained awareness of progress in implementing PDP in other institutions and also developments in other sectors, principally schools and FE colleges.

8.7.4 AGCAS (Scotland) Heads of Service

The Employability Adviser is a Conference member of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS). Full institutional membership carries with it the obligation to undertake Matrix accreditation with the Guidance Council, a process which costs around £2000 and was felt to be inadvisable at this early stage in the development of the service.

Unfortunately, Conference membership only gives limited access to national networks and there is a danger that important information will not be available to the Employability Adviser and therefore the College and its students.

Through membership of the Heads of Service group (which has arisen as the result of prior personal contacts with AGCAS members), the Employability Adviser is involved in:

- 1 the development of a collaborative vacancy database for Scotland which is being developed where all Scottish HEIs will share vacancies notified to them, in agreement with employers.
- 2 national consultations on DHLE, Fresh Talent, Labour Market issues

8.7.5 Edinburgh Heads of Service Group

As a member of this group, the Employability Adviser is working with other local HEI careers Heads to:

- 1 Establish an Edinburgh Graduate Employment Forum, to meet in Autumn 2005
- 2 Develop a guide to graduate employment in the Edinburgh/Lothians area
- 3 Maintain contact with local organisations, such as Graduates for Growth and local Careers Scotland staff.

8.7.6 Graduates for Growth

In regular contact with this scheme, which generates graduate vacancies in small and local businesses and promotes these via Scottish HEI careers services. Receive updates on employment gained by eca graduates.

8.7.7 Other organisations

Contact is also maintained with a variety of other organisations, including Graduates for Business (Scottish Enterprise initiative to offer graduates work experience), STEP (summer work experience scheme for undergraduates), SAAS (Employability Adviser liaises with SAAS about the Postgraduate Students Allowance Scheme (PSAS) on behalf of AGCAS Scotland).

8.8 PROFESSIONAL UPDATING

The Employability Adviser attended the following events:

1. Careers in TV, Film Broadcasting, Scottish Screen, organised by Skillset, Dec 04
2. Fast Forward networking and information event to support new artists, CCA, Glasgow, organised by Cultural Enterprise office/A-N, Jan 05
3. Attended 4 Employability events organised by QAA
4. SIE conference, September 2005 – Employability Adviser and eca's two Enterprise Interns received training to deliver 'YOMP' business game; attended session run by the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship (set up in 2004 by Chancellor of Exchequer) and will be eca contact for event promotion and funding opportunities.

8.9 CAREERS INFORMATION RESOURCES

8.9.1 Careers Library

An out-of-date careers library was inherited from the Heriot-Watt service and is currently being re-shaped and updated to meet the needs of students and to take account of the increasing availability of information on the web.

Discussions have taken place with eca Library staff to place some resources within the college libraries and also to avoid duplication of resources.

8.9.2 Careers Information Leaflets

The following titles were written and distributed to students at workshops. Stocks are also available within the Employability and Enterprise Centre.

- 1 Finding Term Time Work
- 2 Finding Work Experience Opportunities
- 3 Preparing to Apply for Work
- 4 Skills-based CV Example

- 5 Covering letter Example
- 6 Preparing for Interview

In addition, an extensive annotated list of web sites has been written, covering a wide range of graduate recruitment topics, with a focus on the creative arts.

8.9.3 Student Portal/web

Adaptations have had to be made by Computing services to accommodate the Employability and Enterprise information on the portal and also to ensure that this information can be accessed by graduates via the external web site. The information will be available for the start of the 2005-06 session and will be marketed to students.

8.10 VACANCY HANDLING

The number of vacancies received by Student Services in session 2004/5 was:

	Art Related	Non-Art	Total
Graduate Jobs	6	2	8
Other	7	40	47
Placements	9	1	10
Recruitment Agencies	Not Applicable		12
Exhibitions/Competitions	Not Applicable		7
Student Enterprise	Not Applicable		4
Voluntary	Not Applicable		3
Total	22	43	91

This is at present an underdeveloped area within the service and a vacancy strategy document has been submitted by the Employability Adviser, outlining possible options for future development.

8.11 FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

8.11.1 Employability and PDP

There will be further developments in introducing PDP throughout session 2005-06, with the focus being on First Year Studies students.

Discussions will continue through the Employability Steering Group and with individual Heads of Schools to progress the auditing/mapping of Employability and to develop PDP for all years.

Heads of Schools have been asked to submit requests for Employability Adviser-led career planning sessions for their students. While it is important to cover final year students, the importance of encouraging students in earlier years to plan ahead has been stressed and it is hoped more talks to year 2 and 3 students will be arranged. The impact of this increased course-based activity will necessitate a decrease in access to individual guidance appointments and drop in sessions.

8.11.2 Enterprise

The impact of the two Enterprise Interns will be felt during the forthcoming session and several interesting events are being organised by them. Access to external services (e.g. Patent advice), events and competitions will be offered to eca students, giving access to excellent business skill development opportunities, and

to networking with students in other Scottish institutions.

Enterprise activities take place across the institution and discussions will take place to consider ways of co-ordinating the services and information provided to students and to monitor and record student successes in this area.

8.11.3 Marketing

The lack of a dedicated centrally positioned noticeboard will continue to be a problem, however, the development of information provision on the Student Portal will be an improvement.

8.11.4 Vacancies

There is student demand for vacancy information and an improvement in provision may impact positively on graduate destinations. An expansion of vacancy provision has staffing implications, both in generation of vacancy advertising through employer liaison and in terms of handling the vacancies, A proposal on vacancy handling shall be completed in 2005-06.

8.11.5 Fresh Talent Challenge Fund

A bid has been submitted to this fund for a project to provide international students with work shadowing opportunities. If successful, a database of the cultural and creative sector employers will be created to support the scheme. The bid was led by eca but has been submitted in collaboration with the Glasgow School of Art. The bid outcome will be known in September 2005. If successful, there are wider implications for the creation of the database as it would facilitate greater employer liaison, which would impact on the potential for generating vacancies of all types for our students.

8.11.6 Communication with graduates

Computing services are exploring technical issues which will enable graduates to view the Employability pages in the portal, via the external web site. Ideally, vacancies should also be made available to them if progress can be made on the vacancy strategy.

Employability Adviser
September 2005

9.0 PARTNERSHIP WITH EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY

9.1 CENTRE FOR SPORT AND EXERCISE

The following reports on the continuing partnership with the University of Edinburgh in providing students and staff with the opportunity of using the facilities of their Centre for Sports and Exercise, for the same cost as their staff and students.

This academic year, 2004-05, has seen an over 100% upturn in eca staff membership (12 months) however 59 less students took up membership. Student membership, nonetheless remains healthy at 154. The following table breaks down these figures into various sub-groups:

Membership category	Number of members 2004-05	Number of members 2003-04
Student Full Academic Year	140	193
Student Off-Peak	6	11
Student Semester 2	3	9
Student Semester 3	5	Term time only
Total	154	213
Staff 12 months	19	9
Staff 6 months	1	0
Staff 3 months	0	0
Staff 1 month	1	2
Total	21	11

Clearly these facilities have been marketed well to members of staff, however it remains disappointing that there has been a fall in student membership. There was keen interest amongst new students during induction sessions at the beginning of term 1, however interest did then wane and this highlights the need for more focused promotion throughout the year. This is normally undertaken in partnership with the SRC.

Notwithstanding the above, the partnership between eca and the CSE continues to grow stronger each year as more membership options are made available to meet the needs of staff and students. CSE have offered eca the following package for 2005-06:

- Continue partnership under same terms as 2004-05 and include a new retired staff option; staff rate of £3 with staff card and a student rate of £2 with student card, for a single visit.

- An “upbeat” year round promotions strategy, to include sessions for new students and a sustained and targeted campaign for all students and staff: flyers, distribution lists, posters, IT promotions etc.
- Maintain review meetings in August, December and June.

9.2 STUDENT HEALTH

The University of Edinburgh’s Health Centre continues to provide advice and consultation on student and staff health. The Centre sits on the eca Health and Safety Committee and offers induction sessions during “Fresher’s Week”. This year saw some concern regarding the increasing incidence of Mumps internationally and recommendations are to be made during student induction, that students do immunise against this disease.

9.3 STUDENT COUNSELLING

The University of Edinburgh continues to work closely with our Student Counselling Service in the following of areas:

- Staff training – eca counsellors joining UoE team meetings when invited speakers address specific areas of mental health.
- Offering eca students access to their “Wednesday Workshops” at cost per attending student. These workshops are entitled:
 - Confidence building
 - Stress and Relaxation
 - Procrastination
 - International Student Workshop

10.0 CONCLUSION

It is difficult to conclude a review of Student Services' performance and delivery over 2004-05 due to the sense that to a large degree the whole institution continues to be in the middle of a review process; a process which itself has not concluded. By this I mean the Academic Structural Review. This culminated in a report which recommended the clustering of "non-academic" departments and exposed a previously unacknowledged tension between what is perceived to be "academic", what is not and what the effective cross-relationships are. What is important for Student Services is delivering services to students according to what is valuable to them, individually or collectively. How Student Services can support the learner in achieving a holistic and comprehensive educational experience and support the academic process in providing a conducive learning environment - this is our reason d'être. In these terms I think that Student Services have had a successful year.

Firstly, I would like to thank _____ for their dedication to the smooth function of Student Services as a whole and as a unified department. I know that they have done this whist, along with _____, being on the front line of enquiries and anxious referrals and this is no mean feat.

Other achievements are highlighted at the beginning of this document and are detailed throughout. I would like to underline, however, a few particularly significant enhancements of provision: We have introduced this year for the first time the Employability and Enterprise service building upon the traditional Careers Advisory Service and have welcomed Maureen, providing these services, into our team. Students overwhelmingly appreciate this quantum leap of support. Also we have for the first time an International Student Advisory Service, offered by _____.

Many other enhancements this year are significant including Student Exchange arrangements and membership of Erasmus, which _____ has vigorously pursued; the publication of "Barrier Breaking Approaches to Inclusion" which Jay enthusiastically produced and championed; the further cohesion of our co-working with CVCS thanks to _____ the delivery of Essay Writing Workshops by Kay and the English for Academic Purposes classes by Language Support. Enhancement of individual student experience is also to be found within Student Counselling and I would like to thank _____ my fellow-counsellor for her work and to thank all my colleagues above, for their drive, enthusiasm and professionalism in their own fields, over the year.

Head of Student Services

APPENDIX 1: ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURE PAPER

Student Services wish the following statement to be considered during the current exercise of proposing academic restructure:

Although Student Services are often thought to be “non-academic”, this is a misapprehension of a large section of our remit and day to day workload. Teaching occurs within the functions of Employability, Language Support and Academic/Study Skills Support. This includes contributing to academic programmes, as well as delivering co-curricular classes and individual tuition in a supportive capacity. This integrated model of working both in partnership with Academic Schools and offering those students experiencing difficulty confidential support remote from their course structure (and academic records) has developed relatively recently, over the past two years. Restructuring may present an opportunity for these integrated services to further develop, for the benefit of student learning. To this purpose we recommend that certain perspectives should be considered, in order to arrive at a comprehensive re-structuring proposal.

Government HE frameworks emphasise the need for ‘lifelong learning’, employability, flexible course design and delivery and improved retention rates [*Scottish Executive (2003) pp.7, 10, 31-3*]. This clearly makes the work carried out by the student services team central to achieving these goals. There is an expectation graduates’ specialist expertise will be accompanied by a broader portfolio of transferable skills.

“... the development and recognition of the need for ‘soft skills’ is also important and should be seen as a core element of the learning experience which institutions should provide.” [Scottish Executive (2003) p36]

The duty to progress student employability is a primary function of eca. To pursue best practice, as outlined in SHEFC’s “*Learning to Work*” guidelines’ *Executive Summary*, we agree that students’ encounters with employability issues should not be isolated in the domain of one department, but rather, by its very nature, employability skill development should be embraced by all departments involved in each course. Clearly it will be important to avoid unnecessary repetition, eg in training students to make effective presentations, however limiting or concentrating any one element to one level, would also not represent best practice. Such training should be timely and if necessary repeated, reinforced and built upon throughout courses responding also to the needs of advanced entrants. Student Services would commend the existing good practice of a combination of formal on-course training, timed to support future practice, and also the development of self study materials (on-line and paper based) which students can self-refer to for skill enhancement. These elements should be supported, as required, by specialist careers guidance staff independent from any course of study.

Topics such as CV writing and interview preparation and practice should be delivered by professionally trained staff and should aim to prepare students for all types of work. It should not be assumed that all students are going to, or indeed are intending to, pursue a career in an area directly related to their discipline. It is necessary to reflect the reality of graduate first destinations and beyond (eg the 1999 Destinations and Reflections study of those up to 5 years beyond graduation found that 20% were not working within the creative industries sector). Importantly experienced specialists should play a primary role, but this input should not be a substitute for a wider perspective which aims to support all students. Furthermore, the survey estimated that 42% were in self-employment and we propose that Employability should be linked to a Centre for Enterprise, which would liaise externally with various enterprise organisations, (industries), eca graduates and other networks.

It is also clear that in order to further progress PDP towards being a meaningful and effective tool for students, it is crucial that ownership rests with students and not be perceived as part of any one course of study. Nonetheless, each student should have an entitlement to discuss their PDP with a personal tutor, at regular intervals, eg 1 – 3 times per session. This is consistent with QAA guidelines: *Developing a progress file for HE: Recommendations for policy on PDP*. It is therefore necessary that any restructuring takes into account how and where this personal tuition takes place. Student Services, being removed from course assessment (and having neutrality in terms of subject and career development), would support this function offering consultation for both tutor and student.

We hope that the proposed restructure can logistically allow for comprehensive personal tutoring, remitted also to review the learning profile and progress of each student. For disabled students (in compliance with the *Disability Discrimination Act*), this would offer a structured mechanism for monitoring reasonable adjustments and counter some student feedback that these are not regularly reviewed. Should the restructuring proposal promote “flexible learning” in an extensive way, the importance of this review would be amplified. Either way, we consider that “Learning Profile” should be a standing item.

If a more student centred academic structure requires a greater flexibility and range of learning opportunities, we would also propose that consideration is given to Wednesday afternoons being flexible, offering a range of curricular and co-curricular electives, such as study skills development (eg IT specialist tuition on supportive technology including those for dyslexic students), PDP inputs, language support classes, stress management etc. This would offer further means to achieve individual learning objectives planned with personal tutors.

The experiences of students who refer themselves for academic support at eca point to problems with academic socialisation. This is a particular issue for non-traditional entrants, some postgraduates and direct entry students. Currently the institutional approach is to see the problem as being with the student. Part of the solution could be to provide opportunities for student success and progression by embedding elective workshops aimed at those 'new' to the college, Whether these can always be transformed into credit-bearing elective modules is doubtful and perhaps not desirable.

A more integrated approach to Language Support within the college would benefit many international students. One-to-one Language Support tutorials are extremely popular, as they allow students to work on their specific needs in a confidential environment and we would certainly want these to continue. However, resources are limited and demand for these appointments consistently outstrips supply. An integrated English language programme at eca, taught by Student Services staff, would allow more students to access the help they need. This would not in any sense be in competition with students' core programmes, but would facilitate their full participation in student life.

This year has seen the piloting of Language Support classes which are integrated within students' programmes. Feedback from students at the end of the course was overwhelmingly positive and including a language component within courses gives new students at least a basic grounding in academic English. We would therefore recommend that around one and a half hours per week is available on student timetables for all those who would benefit to attend either

- an introductory course on academic English suitable for all new undergraduates (FYS, 2nd year direct entry, etc), or
 - a more advanced course suitable for new postgraduates
- These would not be credit-bearing, but could be accessed by students in addition to their credit-bearing courses.

In this way, the restructuring process could utilise the resources offered by Student Services to meet the needs of students and allow them to develop the language skills that will equip them to gain the most from their studies at eca.

In conclusion, Student Services agree that any proposed institutional restructuring must build upon the existing good working relationships between staff and students and that what is built allows flexibility of learning; is student centred in its purpose and collegiate in its ethos.

Student Services
May 2005

References

Scottish Executive (2003) *A Framework for Higher Education in Scotland*
Higher Education Review Report phase 2, Edinburgh, TSO. [online]
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/lifelong/herp2-00.asp>

SHEFC's "Learning to Work" guidelines' *Executive Summary*:
http://www.shefc.ac.uk/publications/shefc_publications.html

QAA: Developing a progress file for HE: summary report of the consultation exercise
<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressfiles/archive/summary/default.asp>

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Disability Discrimination Act (DDA 2005 section 3) at:
<http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/50013--a.htm>

The draft code of practice on the new duty can be found at:
http://www.drc-gb.org/documents/psd_scotland.doc
The code of practice is to be published in December 2005

The new Part 5A is in section 3 of the 2005 Act at
www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts2005/50013--a.htm#3