

RGASC Annual Report 2021-2022

Updated June 13, 2022

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Table of Contents

<i>Table of Contents</i>	3
Abbreviations Used in this Report	5
List of Tables	6
List of Figures	7
<i>Report Introduction and RGASC Overview</i>	8
Introduction	8
The RGASC’s Mandate	9
The RGASC’s Mission	9
The RGASC’s Organizational Structure	9
<i>Part A: Support for Undergraduate Students</i>	12
A1: General Undergraduate Support	14
One-on-One Appointments.....	14
Writing Retreats.....	20
Online Math Appointments.....	21
Outreach, Marketing and Communications	22
A2: RGASC Core Focus Areas for Undergraduate Support	24
Writing Support.....	24
Numeracy Support.....	30
English Language Learner (ELL) Support	34
Experiential Learning	39
A3: RGASC Programming	41
Head Start.....	41
Facilitated Study Group (FSG) Program	51
Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) Program	57
Program for Accessing Research Training (PART).....	60
A4: Collaborative Programming	69
Accessibility Services	69
Mississauga Academy of Medicine.....	71
UTMSU, Academic Societies, and Clubs.....	72
Game Enhanced Learning.....	74
<i>Part B: Support for Graduate Students</i>	76
B1: Graduate Programming Research	76
B2: Academic and Professional Skills Supports	77
B3: Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC)	77
B4: RGASC Graduate Workshops	79

B5: Graduate Writing Groups	81
B6: Grad Chats	82
B7: One-on-One Appointments for Graduate Students	83
B8: Graduate Programming with the Vice-Dean, Graduate	84
B9: Teaching Assistant’s Training Program (TATP)	84
B10: Future Priorities for Graduate Support	84
<i>Part C: Support for Faculty.....</i>	<i>85</i>
C1: Educational Development	85
Individual Consultations	85
Consultations by Term.....	86
Consultations by Topic	86
Consultations by Department.....	86
Teaching Observations	86
Instructional Support Portal.....	87
UTM Summer Camp for Instructors	87
Invited Presentations and Requested Resources	88
Educational Developer Outreach and Service work	88
C2: Teaching & Learning Collaboration (TLC).....	88
C3: Instructor Drop-in Sessions.....	91
C4: Teaching & Learning Cafés	92
C5: Pedagogical Reading Groups.....	92
C6: TLC Communications.....	93
C7: Future Priorities for Faculty Support	94
<i>Part D: Critical Reflection and Assessment.....</i>	<i>96</i>
D1: Critical Reflection.....	96
D2: Assessment Working Group.....	100
<i>Appendix A: RGASC Advisory Committee Membership (2021/2022).....</i>	<i>101</i>
<i>Appendix B: RGASC Advisory Board Guiding Questions.....</i>	<i>102</i>

Abbreviations Used in this Report

ALC	Active Learning Classroom
ELL	English Language Learner
FMSU	Foundational Math Skills for University
FSGs	Facilitated Study Groups
GNAS	Graduate Needs Assessment
GPDC	Graduate Professional Development Conference
ISUP	Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy
MyGPD	My Graduate Professional Development
PART	Program for Accessing Research Training
PASS	Promoting Academic Skills for Success
PELS	Professional English Language Skills
PMLC	Peer Mentor Learning Community
RGASC	Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre
SASI	Summer Academic Skills Institute
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
TLC	Teaching and Learning Collaboration
UTMSU	University of Toronto Mississauga Student Union
WDI	Writing Development Initiative
WOH	Writing Office Hours

List of Tables

Table 1. Number of Appointments Conducted by Term and Mode, including Utilization rates, 2021–2022	16
Table 2. Waitlist Data, 2018–2022	16
Table 3. Student Appointment Feedback, 2021-2022 (Most Helpful Areas of Support)	19
Table 4. Student Appointment Feedback 2021/2022 (Areas of Improvement)	20
Table 5. Writing Retreat Program (2017–2022)	21
Table 6. Math Drop-In Sessions, 2016-2022	22
Table 7. Front Office Email Activity, 2021/2022	23
Table 8. Website and Social Media Data, 2021-2022	23
Table 9. Courses with Writing Office Hours (WOH) Programming, 2021-2022	26
Table 10. Elements of Academic Reading & Writing Workshop Attendance, 2021-2022	29
Table 11. Number of Students Awarded CCR Annotation for Elements, 2021-2022	30
Table 12. First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance, Summer 2021 Exams	32
Table 13. First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance, Fall 2021	33
Table 14. First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance, Winter 2022	33
Table 15. CIN101 PELS Attendance	35
Table 16. CCT110 PELS Attendance	35
Table 17. VCC101 PELS Attendance	35
Table 18. Generic PELS Attendance	36
Table 19. OHCRIF Summer 2021 Pilot Participation	40
Table 20. Comparative Head Start Attendance Data, 2016-2021	42
Table 21. Head Start Attendance Synchronous Sessions, 2020 and 2021	43
Table 22. Head Start Feedback: Faculty-Led Session Exit Tickets	45
Table 23. Head Start Survey: Likert Question Responses	48
Table 24. Head Start Survey: Before & After Word Association	48
Table 25. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: What learning strategies or academic skills that you learned about during Head Start have you been able to apply during your studies this year?	49
Table 26. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Access of Resources	49
Table 27. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Access of Other Resources	50
Table 28. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Academic Skills Needing More Support	51
Table 29. PASS Completion Rates in the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 Academic Years	57
Table 30. PASS Term 1 Completion Rates	59

Table 31. PART Attendance 2020-2021 and 2021-2022	61
Table 32. Preparing an ROP Attendance 2020-2021 and 2021-2022	62
Table 33. PART Summer Institute Attendance, 2019-2021	62
Table 34. PART Students Completing CCR Requirements, 2021-2022	63
Table 35: PART Attendance (Excluding Summer Institutes) 2017-2022	64
Table 36: PART Summer Institute Attendance, 2017-2021	65
Table 37. PART Students Who Submitted Feedback by Year of Study, 2021-2022	66
Table 38. PART Students by Self-Identified Field of Study, 2021-2022	66
Table 39. Module Attendees' Motivations for Participation in the Module	67
Table 40: PART Feedback Survey: Average Score for Module Questions	68
Table 41. Total Attendance at PMLC Events, Fall 2018-Winter 2022	70
Table 42. RGASC Partnership Activities with the UTMSU Executive	73
Table 43. RGASC Partnership Activities with UTMSU Academic Societies	73
Table 44. RGASC Partnership Activities with UTMSU Clubs and Associations	74
Table 45. Fall 2021 GPDC Workshops	77
Table 46. Winter 2021 GPDC Workshops	78
Table 47: GPDC Attendees' Campus Affiliations from 2017 to 2022	79
Table 48. 2021-2022 RGASC Graduate Workshops	79
Table 49. Grad Writing Group Registration and Attendance	82
Table 50. Grad Chats Schedule and Attendance	83
Table 51. TLC Workshops and Webinars, 2021-2022	89
Table 52. Critical Reflection Summary	96

List of Figures

Figure 1. Total Booked and Drop-In Appointments, 2018–2022	15
Figure 2. Total Unique Students, 2018–2022	15
Figure 3: Student Appointment Feedback Data: Quality of Assistance, 2021/2022	18
Figure 4. Student Appointment Feedback Data: Repeat Users, 2021-2022	18
Figure 5. Student Appointment Feedback Data: Recommend to Others, 2021-2022	19
Figure 6. Head Start Quercus Engagement, 2021	44
Figure 7. Head Start YouTube Views, 2020 and 2021	44
Figure 8: FSG Program Data (2016-2022)	55
Figure 9. PASS Student Retention (2015 to 2022)	58

Report Introduction and RGASC Overview

Introduction

This document reports on the programming and different forms of academic support provided by the RGASC between 01 May 2021 and 30 April 2022.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to present RGASC stakeholders with the information they need to offer feedback on the kind of programming and academic support the Centre provides to the teaching and learning community at the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). Please note that this document has not been written for the purposes of assessment nor self-promotion.

The RGASC Advisory Committee¹ was struck in Fall 2015 with a dual mandate: to facilitate communication between the RGASC and its stakeholders, and to help ensure that the RGASC provides programming and support that genuinely respond to its stakeholders' needs. The Annual Report is intended to provide that Committee with the necessary information to fulfill the terms of its mandate. More generally, the Report is written to facilitate communication between the RGASC and all those members of the University of Toronto community for whom the Centre provides programs and services.

The 2021/2022 Annual Report is organized into four sections:

- Part A: Support for Undergraduate Students
- Part B: Support for Graduate Students
- Part C: Faculty Support
- Part D: Critical Reflection and Assessment

Wherever possible, this Report offers both a quantification of the results of RGASC programming and qualitative feedback from participants. We hope this information will not only inform our stakeholders about the RGASC's activities over the past year, but also inspire a community-wide discussion about the reach, impact, relevance, sustainability, affordability, and scalability of RGASC programming more generally.

The RGASC greatly values feedback from all members of the UTM community. Comments about this Report can be forwarded via email or telephone using the contact information below; readers are also very welcome to drop by the RGASC in person to set up an appointment with an RGASC faculty or staff member.

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¹ The Terms of Reference for the RGASC Advisory Committee are posted on the RGASC website (<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/our-mission-0/rgasc-advisory-committee>). Information regarding this year's Committee membership is also included in the Appendix of this Report.

The RGASC's Mandate

The mandate of the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre is *to support and promote teaching and learning in a range of contexts across UTM*. For students, the RGASC is a resource for developing academic skills through individual appointments and group-based initiatives. For instructional staff and faculty, the Centre is a partner in teaching and learning activities ranging from course and program design to implementation and to the assessment of a given intervention's impact.

Faculty and staff associated with the RGASC have a range of specializations, including academic peer support, academic writing instruction, educational development, English language learning, numeracy, scientific literacy, and supplemental instruction. This diversity of experience and expertise enables the Centre to collaborate productively with partners from across the disciplines and campus, who bring with them a varied and diverse set of teaching and learning objectives.

The RGASC's Mission

The RGASC is a hub for academic skills development on the University of Toronto Mississauga campus and has a dual mandate: to support instructors and teaching assistants in their efforts to implement best practices in teaching and learning, and to support students in their efforts to enhance their academic skills and increase their understanding of their disciplines.

The RGASC works collaboratively with faculty and teaching assistants to help create the best possible environment for learning in classes, labs, and tutorials. It also directly provides academic support to students through a variety of programming channels, including one-on-one appointments, co-curricular courses, workshops, and peer-facilitated study groups.

The RGASC's programming and support are delivered by staff from the RGASC and faculty appointed to the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy. In order to fulfill its mandates, ISUP faculty and RGASC staff maintain active research programs, often by collaborating with disciplinary colleagues to assess the impact of an intervention in the classroom. All RGASC programming is informed by a number of areas of SoTL including Writing Across the Curriculum, supplemental instruction, critical thinking, problem-based learning, and collaborative learning. The principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion as well as Universal Design for Learning (UDL) are foundational to all RGASC programming.

The RGASC's Organizational Structure

As noted in the last three Annual Reports, the RGASC has been involved over the past few years in a reorganization which would see it move into a formal Extra-Departmental Unit A (EDU-A). The process came to an end on 16 June 2020 when [Governing Council formally approved the proposal to create Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy \(ISUP\)](#). The new Institute includes all the faculty and staff from the RGASC, the utmONE courses and one staff member who moved with the courses from the Centre for Student Engagement, and all the faculty and staff associated with the new foundational writing and numeracy courses.

ISUP faculty will contribute in different ways to RGASC programming, with those faculty members originally appointed to the RGASC maybe allocating a greater portion of their workload to RGASC projects than those who have been hired in the last year for the primary purpose of teaching ISP courses. The following is a list of ISUP faculty who taught in the RGASC in 2021/2022:

- Mark Blaauw-Hara (writing support)
- Andie Burazin (numeracy support)
- Michael deBraga (experiential learning support)
- Christopher Eaton (writing support)
- Jordana Garbati (writing support)
- Wanja Gitari (writing support and study support)
- Sheliza Ibrahim (numeracy support)
- Michael Kaler (writing support)
- Margaret Karrass (numeracy support)
- Sarah Seeley (writing support)
- Phuong Tran (ELL support)
- Niki Turnipseed (writing support)
- Jonathan Vroom (writing support)
- Zhaozhe Wang (writing support)

There were a number of other organizational changes within the RGASC that were the result of both the continued growth of its operations and the creation of ISUP. In addition, four new educational developers joined our RGASC staff. Included below is the list below of permanent RGASC staff (in alphabetical order) and their job titles:

- Dianne Ashbourne (Senior Educational Developer)
- Corrine Bent-Womack (Educational Developer, Anti-Racist Pedagogies)
- Amanda Brijmohan (Educational Developer, Assessment and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning)
- Jessica Carlos (Graduate Student Support Strategist; on maternity leave)
- Ann Gagné (Educational Developer, Universal Design for Learning and Accessible Pedagogy)
- Rob Huang (Educational Developer, Instructional Practices and Student Engagement)
- Sarena Johnson (Educational Developer, Indigenous Pedagogies and Decolonization)
- Paula Karger (Graduate Student Support Strategist)
- Cliona Kelly (Centre Coordinator)
- Thomas Klubi (Learning Strategist and Program Manager)
- Kerrie Martin (Program Strategist)
- Rebecca Shaw (Academic Success Strategist)

As well, we would like to acknowledge the extraordinary contributions this year of the sessional faculty who worked to support the hundreds of students who booked synchronous and asynchronous appointments for writing, study skills, and numeracy support through WOnline. Our sessional writing instructors in 2021/2022 were Joel Benabu, Michael Cournoyea, Susan Hopkirk, Patti Luedecke, Paul Raymont, Penny Saeedi, Johan Woodworth, and Mahdi Zamani. Our sessional math instructor was Carlos Restrepo Cunha. Our Academic Elements instructor was Matthew Sutton.

Also, Henna Salim, a former UTM student who has worked for the PASS and FSG programs over the past few years, made invaluable contributions to the RGASC, supporting our operations as an administrative assistant on a casual contract at the RGASC.

The creation of ISUP and movement of RGASC staff and faculty into this new unit has been both a challenging and rewarding experience for everyone involved. The process of welcoming and onboarding a significant number of new faculty and staff (some of whom have never set foot on campus or met their colleagues in person) during the COVID-19 pandemic has been very complicated, but the herculean efforts of a number of dedicated and talented people enabled us to make remarkable progress in the formation of the Institute over the last 11 months.

It is important to note that for all the change and growth we have experienced over the past year, the RGASC has worked very hard to ensure that the Centre does not *appear* any different to its primary stakeholders. The students who walk through our door or navigate to our website today should not see anything different from what they would have observed a year ago. Similarly, instructors or TAs looking for teaching support at the RGASC should have the same experience they have always had. From the beginning of this reorganization process, our goal has been to preserve the RGASC brand that students in particular feel comfortable entering. We sincerely hope that this has been and continues to be true.

Of course, no introduction to an Annual Report documenting the activities of an academic unit in a post-secondary institution during a global pandemic would be complete without a discussion of the online context within which we have operated for the last two years. It is important to keep the online context in mind when reviewing this report. Some programs have experienced significant reductions in the number of students who completed surveys and provided other kinds of feedback, having a critical impact on the utility of the data collected.

For the June 2022 RGASC Advisory Board meeting, we'll be taking a slightly different approach. Each board member has been assigned a question to keep in mind as they explore the report, and will be asked to speak first on that question at the annual meeting. The guiding questions are found in Appendix B.

Part A: Support for Undergraduate Students

Summary of Support for Undergraduate Students

The RGASC continues to innovate and adapt to the changing needs of our undergraduate student community and strives to provide access to all students looking to obtain academic support to enhance their performance. In 2020/21 the centre was forced to move all one-on-one and small group support to an online format and relied heavily on communication and partner collaboration to promote these opportunities. We attempted to employ the same communication and partner strategy for the 2021/22 academic year, in addition to expanding support offerings to include in-person support and found this year to be far more challenging than the previous year. As you will note with the data provided specific to student appointments, since 2020, there has been a marked decline in the number of unique students accessing one-on-one support, and the same can be said for small group support offered through the centre. A dedicated focus to marketing and communication initiatives is required to increase general awareness and promote the value proposition of utilizing support offered through the RGASC.

In 2021/22 the RGASC implemented a number of changes from the previous year to our one-on-one support model, some of which included; expanding the WOnline “booked” appointment time from 45 minutes (30 minutes dedicated to the student for instruction/ feedback and 15 minutes to the Instructor to complete notes and debrief) to 60 minutes (50 minutes dedicated to the student for instruction/ feedback and 10 minutes to the Instructor to complete notes and debrief) per appointment; offering virtual “drop-in” appointments via Zoom; and varying writing retreat hours offered. The RGASC also utilized aspects of the WOnline tool to optimize our appointment hours by: (1) incorporating a new feature within the application to make appointments available for booking once the instructor has indicated the original student has “no showed” to the appointment; (2) ensuring a waitlist is available for all active schedules; (3) creating daily “announcements” within the tool to notify waitlisted students of available support outside of one-on-one booked appointments (Drop-ins and Writing Retreats); (4) initiating a profile update for students registered in WOnline and merging duplicate accounts; and (5) reinstating the booking and cancellation protocols which existed prior to COVID to restrict total number of appointments and number of appointments booked at one time.

As indicated by the Advisory Committee in previous years, the RGASC attempted to mitigate the number of students on the waitlist and employed a variety of tactics to do so including increased time allocated (1913 hours occupied in 2021/22 compared to 1727 in 2020/21) to individual appointments; allocated additional hours for one-on-one, drop-in hours, and writing retreat; and increased communication with students on the waitlist for alternative just-in-time support. Although we continue to see dramatic increases in the total number and total unique students on our waitlist, we are pleased to report the RGASC was able to support an additional 150 more waitlist students (578 waitlist students in 2021/22) than in the previous year (418 waitlist students in 2020/21).

Overall, feedback from students on the support offered through the RGASC continues to indicate an incredibly positive response with 97% of our student appointment feedback indicating the experience as “Good”, “Very Good”, or “Excellent”. Our small group workshops, and other support offered, typically mirror the satisfaction rates seen with our appointment data. Additional data with program specific satisfaction rates can be found throughout the report. As in past years, students indicated areas for improvement with the support to be the length of time allocated; availability of appointments; and Instructor engagement with the assignment and/or amount of feedback provided. The RGASC continues to innovate and pilot new methods with aspects of program design, delivery, and faculty/instructor/staff training, in order to provide the optimum learning experience for our students and ensure faculty/instructors/ staff are empowered to support their students’ needs.

The RGASC’s marketing and communication initiatives have continued to gain traction amongst community partners, and we are grateful for the many partner collaborations and support received in promoting RGASC programming. Unfortunately, we continue to experience challenges allocating consistent resources focused on marketing and communication initiatives at the RGASC. After the Marketing and Communication Assistant role (50% FTE created and hired January 2021) became vacant in June 2021, the position was eliminated by the Dean’s Office and so, the RGASC continues to pursue an adequate solution to this need. Additionally, the RGASC has experienced an abnormally disruptive year in staffing the front office administrative assistant role, a role which acts as the centre’s communication hub for students, faculty, and staff across the community.

A1: General Undergraduate Support

One-on-One Appointments

One-on-one meetings and small group consultations are the most utilized forms of academic support provided by the RGASC. In addition to support with written assignments (typical of a university Writing Centre), the RGASC also offers one-on-one instruction in mathematics, scientific problem-solving, and general academic skills development (e.g., time management, note-taking, lecture-listening, multiple-choice test preparation, critical reading). One-on-one 60 minute appointments at the RGASC are booked in advance and are either in-person, online synchronous or online asynchronous. In addition, the RGASC offers “just in time” support via the drop-in offerings which are shorter appointments (20 minutes) offered on a first-come, first-served basis. This year, the majority of our appointments remained online in either a synchronous or asynchronous format, also some were conducted in-person at the RGASC. Online drop-ins were conducted via Zoom.

The RGASC continues to optimize WOnline (online third party platform used for scheduling, record-keeping, and reporting of appointments with students) to improve students’ access and ease of use through systems integration, schedule organization, and real-time communication. WOnline offers a robust video and chat interface, however, when the opportunity to integrate the UofT Licensed Zoom account was presented, the RGASC determined the integration would benefit students and instructors with respect to ease of use and platform familiarity in addition to the expanded video and whiteboard functionality. We continue to pilot new methods for schedule organization and presentation in order to improve access, ease of use, and communication to engage our student population. In an attempt to increase access and engagement, the RGASC increased LiveChat (Online chat and ticket system available through a widget on the RGASC website) availability during peak periods and deployed announcements through WOnline for programming and just-in-time support opportunities.

When considering the data below, it is important to take into consideration the significant impact the campus closure has continued to have on this aspect of the RGASC’s programming. Demand for online appointments continues to be lower than historical demand for in-person appointments. More importantly, the WCONLINE platform is not conducive to “drop-in appointments,” a service that is extremely popular right before major writing assignments are due in many courses. The RGASC offered online drop-in appointments via Zoom and the online format would appear to be less popular than our pre-COVID, face-to-face drop-ins. (Please see Figure 1. Total Booked and Drop-In Appointments, 2018–2022, on the next page.)

The RGASC moved to a dual delivery model at the end of September and conducted face-to-face appointments focused on Writing, Math, and Study skills throughout fall and winter terms, along with our online offerings. The challenges faced in 2020/2021, with respect to online learning and offering multiple modes of support, persisted this year and had a negative impact on the total number of appointments the RGASC successfully conducted. In addition, over the last two years, we have seen a marked decline in the number of unique students attending one-on-one support at the centre. (Please see Figure 1. Total Unique Students, 2018-2022, on the next page.)

Figure 1. Total Booked and Drop-In Appointments, 2018–2022

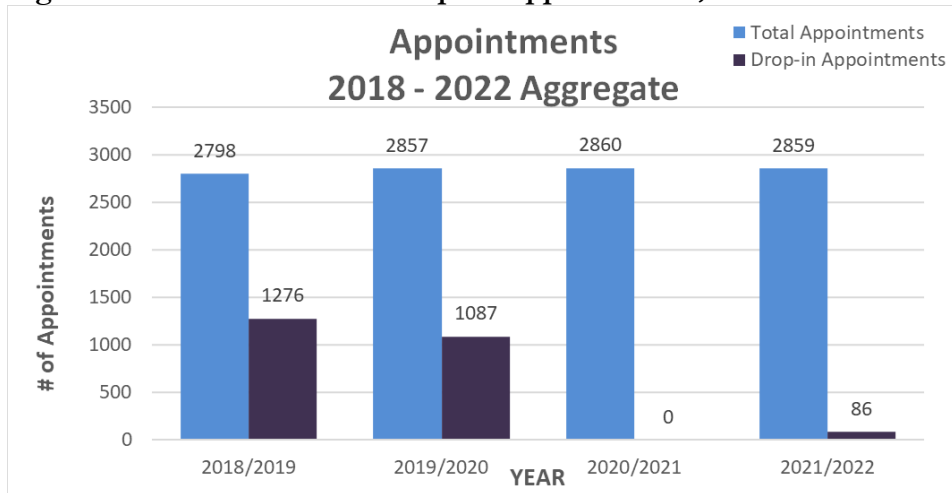
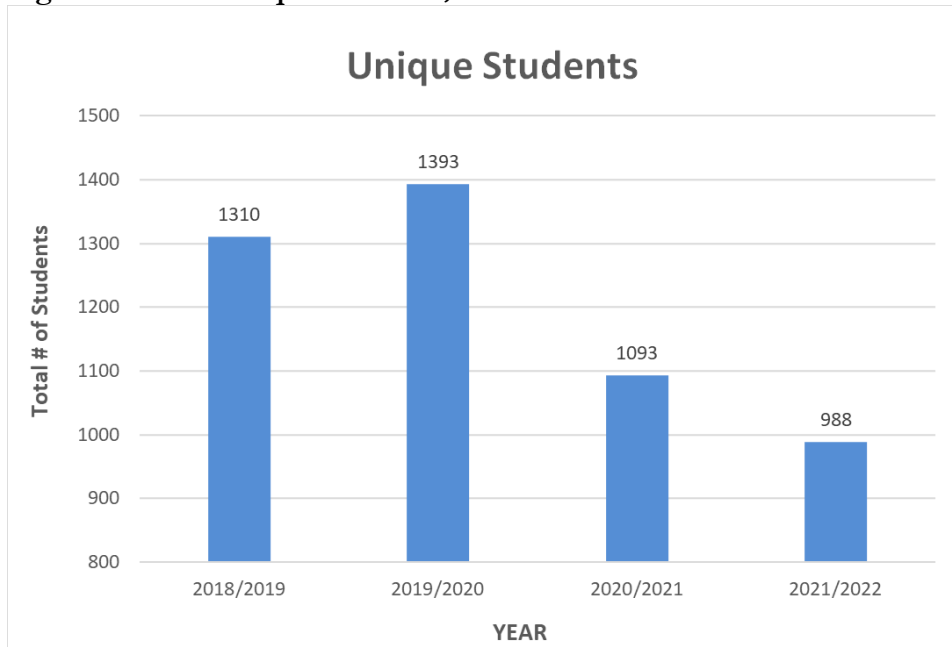


Figure 2. Total Unique Students, 2018–2022



In Table 1, on the next page, we have outlined appointment utilization rates by term and mode, and we would like to draw your attention to the low utilization rates identified across all offerings in summer term and math focus appointments across all terms and modes. Historically, summer term and math and numeracy appointments, in any term, have been the most challenging time and area of study to engage students. We continue to diversify our promotional material and innovate our messaging in an attempt to engage the student population, but further efforts and activities are required to increase utilization rates.

Table 1. Number of Appointments Conducted by Term and Mode, including Utilization rates, 2021–2022

Term	Online Math	In-person Math	Online (Video/Chat) Writing & Study	Online (No Video/ No Chat) Writing & Study	In-person Writing & Study	Course Specific WOH
Summer 2021	21	n/a	96	102	n/a	59
	52	n/a	197	197	n/a	n/a
Utilization	40%	n/a	49%	52%	n/a	n/a
Fall 2021	109	27	398	303	26	554
	139	39	424	311	31	n/a
Utilization	78%	69%	94%	97%	84%	n/a
Winter 2022	61	11	376	348	23	331
	134	12	426	376	29	n/a
Utilization	46%	92%	88%	93%	79%	n/a

*n/a indicates the mode of appointment was not offered during the indicated term

As Table 2 below indicates, the number of waitlisted students at the RGASC increased from 2,661 in 2020/2021 to 4,174 in 2021/2022. While the increase of over 1,500 students on a waitlist is alarming, we were heartened to see of the 714 unique students waitlisted 573 students were ultimately able to book an appointment with an instructor. When considering waitlist data, it important to remember three things: 1) the same student may add their name to the waitlist every single day hoping to get an appointment at a specific time that works for their schedule; 2) many students likely put themselves on a waitlist as the drop-in times available did not suit their schedule; 3) many waitlisted students who didn't book an appointment would be referred to Writing Retreats, Writing Drop-ins, and Math Drop-ins to meet with an instructor and so be counted as "booked."

Table 2: Waitlist Data, 2018–2022

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Waitlisted Students</i>	<i>Waitlisted Unique Students Booked</i>
2018/19	531	222
2019/20	1772	N/A
2020/21	2661	418
2021/22	4174	573

Clearly, more needs to be done to reduce the number of students who want, but do not access, an appointment. This year, we explored a number of new and existing strategies to address our waitlist including the following: (1) initiating online drop-ins via Zoom for Writing and Study and Math and Numeracy; (2) increasing the number of Writing Retreats with varied times, although these provide a somewhat different kind of support than a traditional "drop-in" (see below for more details on Writing Retreats); (3) dramatically increasing the number of "Writing Office Hours" (WOHs) embedded in individual courses. The WOHs are a COVID-19 innovation designed to take the place of course-specific in-person drop-in appointments (which have attracted hundreds of students per term in the past). The sessions are promoted through individual course Quercus websites: students sign up for an appointment in their course's Quercus calendar, and then before the appointment time they email their assignment, which is then sent back to them with feedback. In other words, these are asynchronous online appointments. Because they are linked to specific assignments, WOHs enable RGASC instructors to assist students by addressing focused, immediately relevant

issues. A total of 65 courses and hundreds of different students took advantage of Writing Office Hours in 2021/2022 (see Part A2, Section "Writing Support").

In an effort to make our support accessible to as many students as possible, the RGASC will continue to offer online and in-person appointments at the times of the week that seem most popular based on the last two years of data collected via WOnline. We will continue to operate with extended business hours (Monday through Thursday, 9:00am through 7:00pm in the Fall and Winter terms) and, even after the university resumes normal in-person operations, promote WOHs with our faculty partners.

Student Feedback

Student feedback for our online appointments was collected through a survey distributed through the WOnline system after every single appointment. A total of 445 students responded to the survey in 2021/2022 with 119 respondents who skipped questions, compared to 354 responses in 2019/2020. Of the 445 students who responded, 407 responded to Writing and Study streamed questions and 38 responded to Math and Numeracy streamed questions.

In general, student feedback was positive. Of the 326 students who completed the Appointment Feedback Survey, 0 students indicated the "Quality of the Assistance" they received at the RGASC was poor, only 11 students (3%) indicated adequate support; approximately 36% rated the support they received as either "good" or "very good". Over 60% stated that the quality of assistance at the RGASC was "excellent" (see Figure 3 on the next page). Perhaps most importantly, when asked whether they would use the RGASC again, the vast majority of students (over 97%) answered "yes" and less than 3% indicated they were "not sure" or would not. (See Figure 4, on the next page.)

The results were similar when respondents were asked whether they would recommend the RGASC to another student. Approximately 96% said they would recommend the Centre; approximately 3% said they were "not sure"; one student said they would not advise a peer to visit the RGASC (see Figure 5).

Figure 3: Student Appointment Feedback Data: Quality of Assistance, 2021-2022

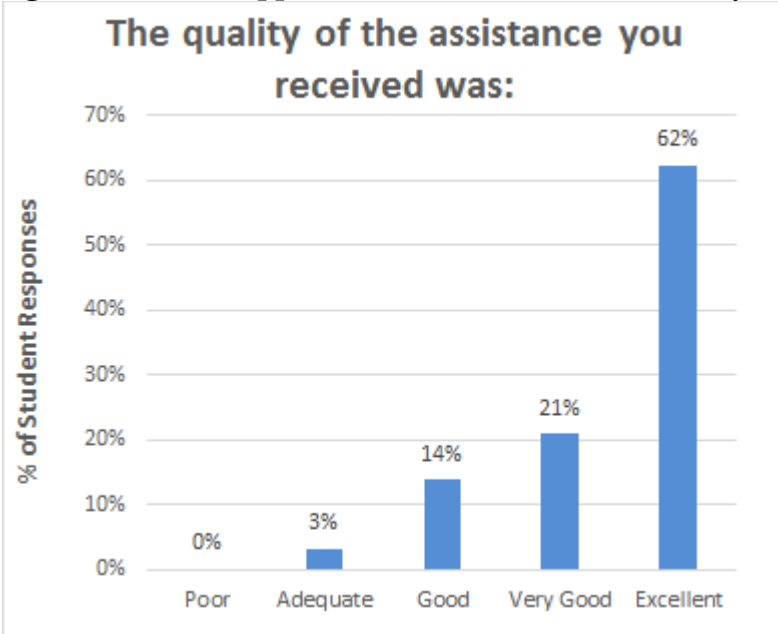


Figure 4. Student Appointment Feedback Data: Repeat Users, 2021-2022

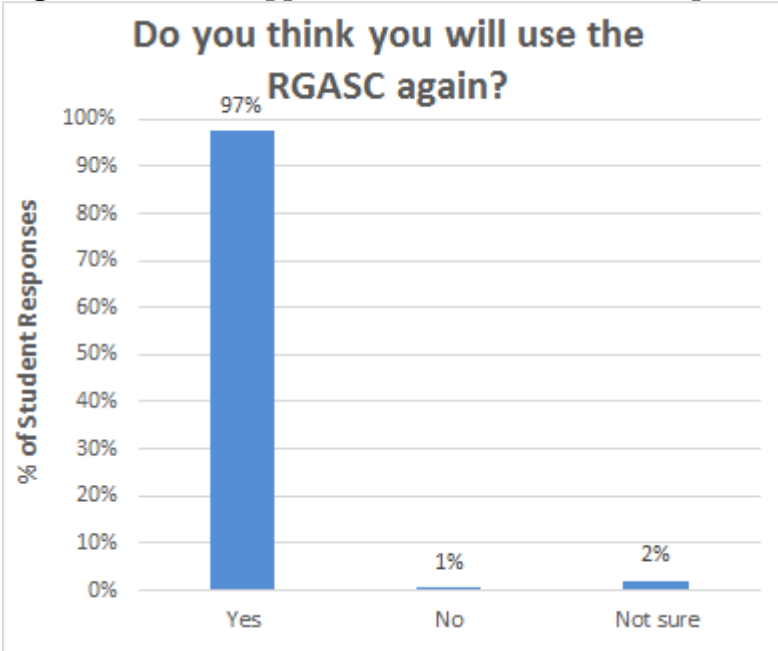
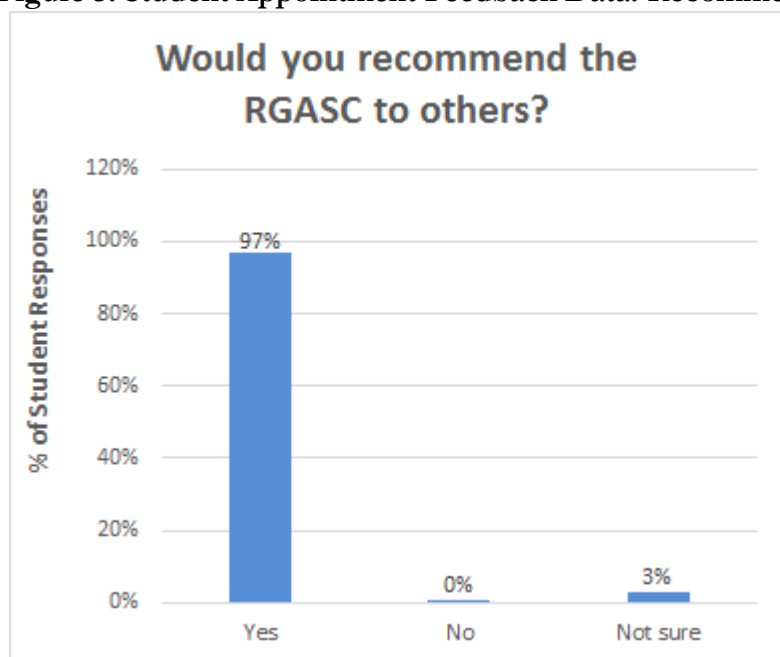


Figure 5. Student Appointment Feedback Data: Recommend to Others, 2021-2022



The data in Tables 3 and 4 provide a more detailed breakdown of students’ perceptions of the quality of support they received during face-to-face consultations with Writing Instructors. Please note that the number of responses is higher than the 326 respondents who completed the survey as some students identified multiple topics when offering feedback. Similarly, the percentage of respondents exceeds 100 because some respondents identified more than one kind of support as helpful.

Table 3: Student Appointment Feedback, 2021-2022 (Most Helpful Areas of Support)

Topic	Count	% of Respondents
Feedback and advice on writing assignments	185	56.75
Brainstorming/discussing ideas	32	9.82
Structure/organization/format	14	4.29
Grammar/spelling/style	19	5.83
Referencing/citing sources	2	0.61
Thesis statement	9	2.76
Feedback on Math Support	29	8.9
Detailed explanation and understanding content	11	37.93
Background knowledge of the content	12	41.38
Additional resources provided	5	17.24
Instructors’ interpersonal skills/approachability	41	12.58
Instructors’ ability to respond to students’ specific needs	13	3.99
Technology/ Appointment Format	10	3.07
Miscellaneous	3	.92

As Table 3 suggests, students identified a wide variety of topics in their responses to the question “Please describe what you found most useful in this session.” Of course, it is not surprising that the majority of students (almost 56.75%, or 185 students) identified “feedback and advice on writing assignments” as the most helpful part of their sessions—this is precisely what the vast majority of students are looking for in their appointments. That said, it is reassuring to know that students generally find this kind of support to be useful. The number of students who identified “brainstorming/discussing ideas” (9.8% or 32 students) and “structure/organization/format” (almost 4.3%, or 14 students) as the most helpful aspect of their session is slightly lower than typical. We were pleasantly surprised, on the other hand, 12.6% (41 students) of respondents commented positively on the Instructors’ interpersonal skills and approachability during their appointment.

Table 4: Student Appointment Feedback, 2021-2022 (Areas of Improvement)

Topic	Count	% of Respondents
No suggestion/satisfied with service	223	68.40
Improve availability/number of appointments/number of drop-in hours	30	9.20
Interaction level	35	10.74
Additional Feedback requested/ needed	25	7.67
Platform/ Appointment Format	9	2.67
Negative experience	5	1.53

The table above provides an overview of students’ suggestions for improvement. While most students (almost 69%) were entirely satisfied with their experience at the RGASC, approximately 11% of respondents indicated they would like more detailed / specific feedback. This is a response more frequently seen with feedback received from students attending asynchronous online appointments where instructors did not edit or revise papers and restricted their comments to marginal and global comments.

Another subset of respondents (11%, or 35 students) stated that they would like to have more interaction and stated the volume of feedback was insufficient or too vague. A proportion of students (9%, or 30 respondents) also state a need for increased availability, number of appointments, and drop-in times.

Writing Retreats

We continued to offer Writing Retreats online via Zoom in fall and winter terms. As in previous years, these sessions were intended to not only provide students with a different way of interacting with a writing instructor, but also to create a relaxed, supportive environment where students could sit down and do some actual writing with like-minded peers. Since moving the retreat online, we have witnessed a continued decline in total attendances and total unique student attendance.

This year, Writing Retreats were facilitated by ISUP faculty and CUPE Unit 3 Writing Instructors at the centre. The instructors provided feedback on writing in progress and encouraged students to stay and write for as long as they liked. With the support of the student facilitator who greeted attendees, took attendance, explained the [rules and guidelines](#), and monitored the general Zoom

meeting, faculty were able to conduct individual consultations in a Breakout Room. To more clearly differentiate between Writing Retreats and other forms of writing support (appointments or Writing Office Hours) students were informed that they could receive up to two 15-minute consultations during the Retreat.

As Table 5 below indicates, a total of 67 students attended the Writing Retreats held between September 2021 and April 2022, a significant decrease from the 120 who attended the retreats the prior year. Given some of the challenges experienced with online offerings, limited and inconsistent staffing, these numbers are acceptable but a definite focus on promotion and communication is key to raising awareness and attendance.

As is typical with this kind of support, many of the students who participated in the Retreats were repeat visitors. The kinds of questions typically addressed during these kinds of sessions are very similar to those that are brought to a formal, booked appointment (e.g., a range of lower and higher order concerns). Some students attended the Retreats because they had set themselves strict deadlines and were using the hours in that space as a way of holding themselves accountable.

Table 5: Writing Retreat Program, 2017–2022

Session	Total number of attendees	Total number of unique attendees
2018/ 2019	202	133
2019/ 2020	113	65
2020/ 2021	120	72
2021/ 2022	67	44

Online Math Appointments

The RGASC offers one-on-one math appointments for students seeking support in foundational math. This support was offered through in-person and online synchronous which are 60 minutes, and drop-in appointments that lasted about 20 minutes depending on the students' needs. With the addition of synchronous (video and chat) appointments, booked by students through WOnline, students seeking numeracy and math support have multiple modes to access appointments. Both ISUP Math and Numeracy Faculty and a Math Instructor conducted in-person and online math and study appointments from May 2021 to April 2022. Math appointments were mostly booked by students who took differential calculus (MAT132/MAT135) and integral calculus (MAT134/MAT136).

As always, the focus of the math appointments is on foundational mathematical background knowledge. The sessions are not at all intended to address or re-lecture concepts that are covered in the university mathematics or statistics courses.

Historically, math appointments have a utilization rate of approximately 60%. However, in the Fall 2021 term, there was an increase in appointments booked by students and the utilization rate increased from 37% in Fall 2020 to an average of 74% across in-person and online offerings. Additional work in building community awareness and timely distribution of information will lend a great deal to the additional success and growth of this programming.

Table 6 below shows the total number of students who booked online math appointments at the RGASC this year compared to the number who took advantage of drop-in appointments in previous years. We are pleased with the increase in total number of online math appointments conducted at the RGASC but concerned about the small number of students taking advantage of the drop-ins. Additional work needs to be done to collaborate with Mathematics Instructors to promote just in time support available, including drop-in schedules.

Table 6: Math Drop-In Sessions, 2016-2022

Academic Year	Math Attendance
2016/2017	147 (drop-in)
2017/2018	152(drop-in)
2018/2019	167(drop-in)
2019/2020	207
2021/2022	257

*2019/2020 and 2021/2022 represent the total number of math appointments conducted

Outreach, Marketing and Communications

All RGASC programs depend to some degree on the effectiveness of our marketing and communications efforts for their success. As we have noted in previous Annual Reports, it can be quite challenging to promote our programming because (unlike most Departments on campus) our target audience is not very well-defined and can be quite difficult to reach. Of course, our programs and services suffer sometimes from the stigmas or misinformation associated with them. Some students, for example, will simply not attend a writing workshop or book a writing appointment because they wrongly assume this kind of support is only for weak students or those who did not learn English as a first language.

Over the past few years, we have solicited input from the RGASC Advisory Committee and hired some extraordinary students and casual staff to address these challenges and improve our marketing and communications efforts. As a result, we are confident that the RGASC’s visibility has increased and that our stakeholders’ understanding of our programming and services has improved. The new RGASC website, social media presence, and collaborations with other units have all helped us communicate more effectively with UTM students, staff, and faculty.

Although the RGASC’s general email address is extremely busy (see Table 7, on the next page), we continue to utilize the online chat tool, LiveChat, to expand access to students and the greater community (see Table 8, below). This service provides faculty, students and the general community instant answers and referral information to RGASC programs and resources across the university.

Table 7: Front Office Email Activity, 2021-2022

Year	Total # of unique senders	Total # of email responses
2021/ 2022	1240	3043

Table 8: LiveChat Analytics, 2021-2022

	2021-05	2021-06	2021-07	2021-08	2021-09	2021-10	2021-11	2021-12	2022-01	2022-02	2022-03	2022-04	Total
LiveChat per month	9	8	21	10	33	19	20	6	20	15	17	4	182
Average chat per week	2.25	2	5.25	2.5	8.25	4.75	5	1.5	5	3.75	4.25	1	3.79
LiveChat tickets received while “offline”	4	5	17	11	20	8	7	1	6	3	10	9	101
Rated Good	6	4	7	4	10	12	8	0	5	9	5	0	70
Rated Bad	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4

The RGASC is now able to share website and social media data with our stakeholders. The following tables show the reach of our website and social media channels over the past year. Table 8 shows some of the implications of these data for our future marketing and communications efforts.

Table 8: Website and Social Media Data, 2021-2022

Platform	Total Users/Followers	Total Posts	Total Impressions	Profile Visits	Total Reach	Total sessions	Total page views
Website	28,000	x	x	x	x	57,000	110,382
Twitter	1044	345	371,128	15365	x	x	x
Instagram	1194	243	n/a	x	n/a	x	x

A2: RGASC Core Focus Areas for Undergraduate Support

Writing Support

Writing Development Initiative (WDI)

The largest single writing-related project that the RGASC supports is the Writing Development Initiative (WDI), which provides financial and organizational support for departments to enhance the writing components in their courses. Historically, funding for the WDI has been provided by the Office of the Dean while the RGASC administered the program, but after the formal creation of ISUP as an EDU-A and the movement of the RGASC into this new institute, the Office of the Dean moved funding for the WDI into RGASC's base budget.

WDI support is typically allocated to discrete projects linked to particular courses, but can also potentially impact several courses, as for example in the case of the five-course CSC project (involving CSC148, CSC209, CSC236, CSC258, and CSC263) that began this year. To ensure that projects are appropriate in terms of program and discipline, and that they respond to authentic needs, individual faculty members or Departments are encouraged to take the initiative to submit proposals for interventions to improve the development of writing in their programs. A Writing Specialist provides support as needed in the development of proposals, and the completed proposals are adjudicated by the Writing Development Initiative Committee, whose members include the RGASC's two Writing Specialists, a librarian, and faculty representatives from across the curriculum. Typically, proposals to the WDI involve a combination of extra writing assignments (often scaffolded), writing-focused tutorials, additional instruction in disciplinary writing practices, and enhanced formative feedback on written assignments. In 2021/2022, 30 courses across the campus with total enrolments of ca. 8,500 were directly supported. In the last year, the WDI supported its largest ever number of new projects, ranging from very large ones (the CSC multi-course project mentioned above and a project in ANT102) to moderately sized ones (a project in POL346) to smaller ones (projects in ANT313, GGR463, and SOC379). In most of these courses, we played a larger role than usual in terms of organizing support, developing materials, and working with TAs, so it was a very busy year for us! This year, we have received 7 new proposals: two of these are from the Political Science department, which has run WDI projects before, but the rest are from departments or programs that are new to the WDI, including CCiT, Forensic Science, and French.

Once approved, projects are often repeated, and the WDI encourages faculty to reflect on and develop their projects over time. If a given project is successful and has attained a reasonably stable form, the WDI Committee may recommend that its costs be transferred into the departmental base budget. Thus, the WDI should be seen as a mechanism through which innovative uses of writing instruction and instruction through writing can be supported, and faculty innovation and reflection can be encouraged and rewarded. It should be noted as well that a) many of the faculty working with the WDI are also involved in other pedagogical initiatives at the RGASC or active members of the [*Teaching and Learning Collaboration at UTM*](#) and b) TAs in WDI-supported courses are trained in using and assessing writing. Thus, the WDI is a key part of the teaching and learning community at UTM. As well, the WDI has provided support for research: this year a new writing research endeavor was begun in ERS211, an article dealing with work done in HIS101 was published in the *International Journal for the Study of Teaching and Learning*, an article detailing work in BIO205 was accepted by the

journal *Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie*, and we began a new research project that drew on materials produced in the WDI Writing TA Training sessions to examine TA training in and comfort with working with student writing.

Over the past several years, a priority for the WDI has been the enhancement of our project assessment process. Accordingly, a part of the WDI's budget is allocated to the assessment of funded projects, which typically involves the analysis of samples of writing produced in the course, and can also include student surveys (see the Annual Reports for the past several years and the [WDI page](#) on the RGASC website for more details). The only thing binding all WDI projects together is their use of writing; in other ways, they are all unique, and so assessment needs to be refined in each case so that it can respond to the particularities of each project: this year, for instance, we collaborated with faculty running the various CSC WDI projects in order to design broad criteria that would harmonize the assessments across the courses, as well as more course-specific tweaks of these criteria to make them relevant to each particular course. Assessment data and overviews of the writing development in courses are provided both to the instructors of those courses, with the expectation that they would use these data for their Final Reports and their own reflection, and also directly to the members of the WDI Committee. Given the range of projects supported and their diverse goals, it is not possible to summarize all the assessments; however, we can say that, in general, the projects tended to be successful in enhancing their students' competencies in the targeted areas. For example, with regard to the project in SOC379, the assessment RA writes that "some of the more notable improvements that were observed in the post samples relate specifically to the inclusion, interpretation, and integration of evidence found under the category of Paragraph Structure. Whereas in pre samples, paragraphs might contain general summaries of the issues or the source material, some post samples show students including additional evidence that further supports their points, especially in the policy recommendations section."

TA Training

In order to support WDI-funded courses, the RGASC works closely with TAs, a group that is often underappreciated in the development of pedagogical initiatives. At the start of both the Fall and Winter terms, we offered seven-hour Writing TA Training Sessions, at which TAs learned about the benefits of enhanced focus on disciplinarily relevant aspects of writing in their courses, and were given tools for, and training in, creating writing-focused environments. The Writing TA Training Sessions were attended by a total of 56 TAs (30 in September 2021, 26 in January 2022) from across the disciplines, and in several cases, the TAs attending were "head" or "writing" TAs, passing their training on to the other course TAs. Due to the ongoing pandemic and the very real dangers of Zoom fatigue, we followed the same model this year as we did last year: the training was divided into four segments consisting of two two-hour Zoom meetings, each preceded by one and a half hours of asynchronous work (exercises and reflective activities) that TAs did individually to prepare themselves for the meetings.

As in previous years, TAs overall appreciated the training: all TAs who responded to our feedback survey rated it as "very useful" (18 out of 26) or "fairly useful" (6 out of 26). The material presented was mostly new to the TAs—all identified at least one thing in the training that was new: as one TA noted, "I have done two TATP certificates and still found a lot of new material in these sessions." As has generally been the case, TA survey responses indicate that they especially appreciated the

sessions on assessment (particularly the focus on thinking in terms of feedforward rather than feedback), sentence-level issues, and teaching about academic integrity.

In addition to the WDI-related training session mentioned above, in 2020/2021, we ran 16 writing-focused training or benchmarking sessions in WDI-supported courses to harmonize the way that TAs grade and give feedback on assignments

Instructor Support for Writing Assignments

The RGASC’s writing support is provided to a wide range of courses, whether or not they receive WDI funding. Typically, this support focuses on assignment design in writing-intensive courses. In 2021/2022 we were able to directly contribute to the creation, integration and execution of writing-based tasks in the following courses: ANT102, ANT200, ANT313, CSC148/209/236/258/263, ENG110, ENG203, HIS392, HIS494, POL346, PSY321, PSY442, SOC304, SOC317, SOC345, SOC379, SSM1120, and VCC101. This total does not include consultations with faculty preparing projects for WDI proposals. These contributions often included assisting with the development of assessment criteria (and associated rubrics) that help improve feedback, consulting on creating scaffolded assignment structures, and helping develop tools to assess the efficacy of writing instruction, such as student surveys and analyses of student writing. Of the courses with WDI projects, we were particularly heavily involved with the five CSC courses in terms of developing appropriate evaluative criteria for their students’ writing work.

Direct Student Assistance for Writing Assignments

In addition to our in-class presentations and workshops, our direct contact with students takes place primarily in course-specific WOnline appointments that are focused on specific assignments. Before the pandemic, these appointments were in-person and were referred to as “dedicated drop-ins,” but since March 2020 these have been entirely online and asynchronous, and have been renamed “Writing Office Hours” (WOHs). We held a total of 946 WOH appointments this year. We ran WOHs for the following courses:

Table 9. Courses with Writing Office Hours (WOH) Programming, 2021-2022

• ANT102	• CSC148	• GGR202	• POL443
• ANT313	• CSC209	• GGR208	• RLG101
• BIO152	• CSC236	• GGR305	• PSY210
• BIO153	• CSC263	• GGR463	• PSY321
• BIO201	• ECO320	• HIS102	• PSY331
• BIO205	• EDS100	• HIS105	• SOC109
• BIO375	• ENG102	• HIS494	• SOC221
• BIO400	• ENG110	• ISP010	• SOC317
• BIO417	• ENG202	• JGE378	• SOC345
• BIO434	• ENG203	• PHL103	• SOC349
• CCT110	• ENV201	• POL112	• SOC379
• CCT205	• ERS111	• POL114	• SSM1120
• CCT208	• ERS211	• POL209	• UTM118
• CIN101	• GGR111	• POL346	• UTM192
			• VCC101
			• MScSM Research Paper Course.

These appointments from Table 9 are entered into WCOonline and included in the totals reported above in Part A1: General Undergraduate Student Support.

While the change from in-person “dedicated drop-ins” to online WOHs was forced upon us by the pandemic, it has proven to be a blessing in disguise, as the asynchronous WOH format allows us to expand our support dramatically and to promote the offerings directly, while cutting down on RGASC administrative and space requirements. WOHs are set up and promoted by the Writing Specialists through the course Quercus websites: students sign up for an appointment (slots are listed in a course’s Quercus calendar) and also for WCOonline (so that their appointments can be entered into the system), and then before the appointment time they email their assignment to the Writing Specialist responsible for the course, who is familiar with the assignment and who has touched base with the instructor regarding particular concerns that they may have. The Writing Specialist can thus give informed, assignment-specific feedback to students.

Because they are linked to specific assignments, WOHs enable us to assist students by addressing focused, immediately-relevant issues. But in addition to providing support with regard to specific assignments, WOHs raise student awareness of the RGASC; they also are enthusiastically embraced by faculty and help keep the RGASC up to date with activities in these courses. These are significant benefits and make them worth continuing, even in cases where overall attendance is not high. As well, the asynchronous format means that Writing Specialists do not have to sit and wait for students: if bookings are underused, we can do other work. In the past year, as in previous years, the trend was for WOHs to be either very well or very badly attended, depending to a great extent on the instructor’s role in promoting them—we do our own promotion on the course website through timed announcements, but nothing we do is as valuable as an instructor encouraging students to attend.

We also gave 135 writing-focused presentations or workshops, almost all in credit-bearing courses from across the disciplines. The presentations and workshops covered topics such as academic integrity, paragraph structure, thesis statements, critical reading and thinking, and exam writing. Finally, in addition to our writing-focused presentations and WOHs support, we also implemented assignment-specific writing retreats in SOC109 in both the Fall and Winter terms. The retreats took place on Zoom; students were put in breakout rooms to discuss their ideas for an assignment, which was facilitated by a guide, and they were given time to implement those ideas in writing. In the Fall, 63 students participated, and we surveyed the students on their experience; the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Based on this success, we applied for (and were awarded) a TDI grant to expand the retreats and to conduct research on their impact. In the Winter, we received ethics approval to conduct this research, and we incentivized participation. A total of 124 students participated; data has been collected and will be analyzed in the Summer. We hope to expand the retreats into other courses next year. This initiative is a good example of us thinking outside the box and collaborating with faculty to provide impactful course-specific student support.

[Assignment-Specific Writing Retreats](#)

In the second half of the Winter term, assignment-specific writing retreats were offered in three courses (POL346, SOC109, and PSY327), in the hopes that they would help address the isolation students often feel when writing assignments during the pandemic. These retreats, which took place

on Zoom, gave students an opportunity to discuss their ideas for an assignment with their classmates, as well as some dedicated time to write (and implement the ideas they discussed).

A total of five 90-minute retreats were held (two in POL346, two in SOC109, and one in PSY327). For the first 45 minutes, students took turns sharing their ideas and plans for their assignments, and asked questions about anything they were unsure of. They also took turns responding to each other in this time. The discussions were always lively and engaging and could easily have lasted longer than 45 minutes. The next 30 minutes were dedicated to independent writing, with cameras and mics off. For the last 15 minutes, students raised some final questions, and they took turns sharing their next steps.

The retreats were unfortunately not very well attended (three in the first POL346 retreat; six in the two SOC109 retreats; four in the PSY327 retreat), which we attribute partly to the fact that the idea to have them arose late in the winter term, meaning that there was not a great deal of time for promotion. For the students that came to the retreats, the discussions were very engaging and productive: students were explaining course concepts to each other, answering each other's questions, and giving each other ideas for their assignments. Every student who participated noted how much better they felt about their assignments after the retreats. In fact, based on the success of the first POL346 retreat, the course instructor decided to dedicate an entire class later in the term to a writing retreat led by an RGASC Writing Specialist (30 students attended). After a 35-min break-out discussion, numerous students spontaneously commented in the chat how beneficial the discussions were.

Despite the low numbers, we believe course-specific writing retreats should be explored further next year, especially if online learning continues. Of course, this model of writing support should be explored only when students are working on assignments where this kind of collaboration and sharing of ideas is appropriate.

Adjusting to Working in a Pandemic

To speak broadly, other than the writing retreats, our activities this past year differed more in terms of execution and modality than in terms of the basic nature of our support. We still gave presentations and workshops, but we did them online, and a significant number of them (24 all told, or roughly 24%) were in the form of asynchronous lectures or lecturettes. As mentioned above, our “dedicated drop-ins” turned into online WOHs, and these were quite successful: in future, even when in-person meetings become possible again, we will keep the WOH format, simply because it is efficient and because students respond positively to it: more students attended WOHs than they had dedicated drop-in sessions in 2019/2020. This year, we made more use than usual of course websites to spread information and promote events, which not only enhanced student uptake, but also integrated us more deeply into the courses that we supported. In last year's Annual Report, we wrote that “we expect that there will be somewhat less demand for workshops and presentations than in the past, but we hope that there will be opportunities to integrate this support more fully into the course”; the latter did happen, but the former did not—we were as busy as ever.

Elements of Academic Reading & Writing Workshop Series

In the 2021/2022 year we ran six iterations of a six-week workshop series that focused on academic reading and writing (three iterations each term, for the sciences, social sciences, and humanities). Students who completed the series received a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) notation on their transcripts; this required them to attend five workshops, complete four homework assignments, and write a final reflection. Participation in the workshops was significantly higher this year than last year: in 2019/2020, average attendance per workshop was six students and a total of 18 students completed the series, whereas in 2020/2021, the average attendance was 11, and 34 students completed.

Table 10: Elements of Academic Reading & Writing Workshop Attendance, 2021-2022

Topic	Fall Attendance	Winter Attendance
Humanities Stream		
Why Do Academics Write Articles	5	3
Quick and Efficient Reading Strategies	4	4
The Article in the Context of its Field of Research	4	3
Identifying and Critiquing Arguments and Counter-Arguments	2	3
The Basic Element of Academic Thought: The paragraph	3	3
Words, Expressions, and Nuance: Getting the most information out of every sentence	3	1
Social Sciences Stream		
Why Do Academics Write Articles	10	3
Quick and Efficient Reading Strategies	7	5
The Article in the Context of its Field of Research	6	4
Identifying and Critiquing Arguments and Counter-Arguments	7	3
The Basic Element of Academic Thought: The paragraph	7	3
Words, Expressions, and Nuance: Getting the most information out of every sentence	7	3
Sciences Stream		
Why Do Academics Write Articles	5	2
Quick and Efficient Reading Strategies	3	4
The Article in the Context of its Field of Research	5	3
Identifying and Critiquing Arguments and Counter-Arguments	4	1
The Basic Element of Academic Thought: The paragraph	3	3

Words, Expressions, and Nuance: Getting the most information out of every sentence	4	3
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Table 11. Number of Students Awarded CCR Annotation for Elements, 2021-2022

Stream	Term	# of Students Awarded CCR Annotation
Humanities	Fall 2021	3
	Winter 2022	2
Social Sciences	Fall 2021	4
	Winter 2022	1
Sciences	Fall 2021	1
	Winter 2022	2

Numeracy Support

[Numeracy Development Initiative \(NDI\) Program](#)

The [Numeracy Development Initiative \(NDI\)](#) ran a third time in the 2021-2022 academic year. There were two returning projects and one new application. With the numeracy support being provided through [ISP130](#), the NDI program has now ended.

[Foundational Math Skills for University Workshop Series](#)

The Office of the Dean has kindly funded the Foundational Math Skills for University (FMSU) Workshop Series for the second summer. The RGASC developed and ran the FMSU programming. FMSU workshop series was offered for free and voluntary for incoming students to improve their chance in succeeding in their first-year math courses and better transition to an online university platform. The objective of this workshop series was to help ensure that incoming students whose learning was impacted by COVID-19 would be adequately prepared for their first-year math courses.

FMSU took place over six weeks in July and August 2021. It provided a review and practice of basic concepts, formulas, algorithms, and techniques in arithmetic, algebra, and functions. The curriculum was informed by high school teachers and UTM math instructors' experiences teaching their students. Many students very often do not do well in first-year university math courses because of their weak understanding and technical skills of all basic concepts and techniques (e.g., fractions, simplifying, solving equations, graph of functions, recalling basic properties of exponents and trigonometric expressions).

The workshop series was also a fantastic opportunity for incoming students to lessen their anxieties as they navigate through their first term at UTM. It gave them an exposure to online university teaching and expectations with a focus on math courses. The first week of the workshop series provided students with tips on how to succeed in a first-year math course, different online applications used within a math course (e.g. Piazza, Crowdmark), and resources the RGASC provides during the year for math support. The instructors also used Quercus the same way as for credit-bearing university courses (i.e., to post materials, activities, resources, and non-credit bearing tasks). The remaining five weeks students reviewed and practiced the following topics: numbers and operations and basic algebra; equations and inequalities; functions including exponential and logarithmic functions; trigonometry; and mathematical language.

As an added new feature to the FMSU workshop series, three social events were hosted outside of any session. Each social event had a specific theme: Kahoot to succeed, Let's explore some first-year math, and meet FSG and senior students. The point of the social events was for students, in a more casual and fun setting, to learn more about the first-year math course experience and to connect with math instructors and other incoming and senior students.

The total enrolment for FMSU was 505 students while 106 completed all tasks within the workshop series. Note that there was no incentive for completing all the tasks.

Two post-student feedback surveys were administered: one right after the completion of the FMSU workshop series (56 responses), and another midway through the Winter 2022 term (23 responses). From the student responses, FMSU assisted students to strengthen their mathematical background before entering their first-year math courses. The students' opinions did not change significantly from the Summer 2021 to Winter 2022.

Examples of student feedback on the FMSU initiative:

“Thank you for everything! This program was amazing and extremely useful.”

“Looking forward to get a proper use of all the resources and get back to campus. :)”

“The classes were great! They were very helpful, straight to the point, and comprehensive.”

“The instructors were really friendly and gave very detailed explanations. I now know for sure that there are a lot of resources at my disposal should I ever need them and that the professors are not scary! My favourite was the social events; I found those really helpful for mentally preparing myself for the content in my math courses this year.”

“I think it was great class to get me back in the mindset of learning math.”

“RGASC was really very helpful and these sessions were very interactive.”

First-Year Math Meet Ups

The RGASC again offered just-in-time math support called First-Year Math Meet Ups for students in Differential Calculus (MAT132 /MAT135) and Integral Calculus (MAT134 /MAT136). Each session was hosted online and was two hours long and offered multiple times within a given week. The objective of a Meet Up is to discuss both in person or online past assessment questions from the perspective of strengthening foundational math knowledge and understanding how to proceed in formulating a solution. Three different teaching assistants (one per term) were trained by the RGASC Numeracy Specialist to host all Meet Ups.

For the first time, First-Year Math Meet ups were hosted during a summer term. In Summer 2021, the Meet Ups were only for final examinations to practice on foundational concepts in order to gain a mindset to better solve questions. As Table 12 below indicates, a total of 55 students attended the Meet Ups.

Table 12: First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance (Summer 2021 Exams)

Differential Calculus		Integral Calculus	
Date	# of Students	Date	# of Students
August 11	6	August 9	4
August 15	4	August 14	7
		August 16	34

The summer term enrollment for differential and integral calculus courses is significantly less than during the regular fall and winter terms. With approximately 350 students who take these courses, the attendance is good.

The First-year Math Meet Ups in the Fall 2021 had some challenges with the uncertainty due to Covid to get the programming up and running. As a result, Meet Ups started after the October 2021 reading week. The programming for the Meet Ups was developed so that students work on just-in-time foundational concepts in order to better understand more advanced topics in their differential and integral courses. Towards the December 2021 final examination period, the Meet Ups assisted students to gain confidence and better strategize in writing their final examination. The recorded attendance is on the next page in Table 13.

Table 13: First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance (Fall 2021)

Differential Calculus			Integral Calculus		
	Date	# of Students		Date	# of Students
During Term	Week of October 25th	1;2;2	During Term	Week of October 18th	0;1
	Week of November 8th	0;2;4		Week of November 1st	1;1
	Week of November 22nd	1;3;8		Week of November 15th	0;1
Final Exam	Week of November 29 th & December Final Exam Period	0;13;10;12	Final Exam	Week of November 29 th & December Final Exam Period	2;0

During the Fall 2021 term, in a given week, differential calculus had three sessions and integral calculus had two sessions. For the Final Exam Meet Ups, differential calculus had four sessions and integral calculus had two sessions. Differential calculus Meet Ups had more sessions because incoming students enroll in differential calculus courses in the fall term, whereas integral calculus students are repeating the course either because they dropped out or failed previously.

In the Winter 2022 term, the First-year Math Meet Ups encountered another speed bump due to an unforeseen circumstance. For this reason, Meet Ups began as the university transitioned back to in person in February 2022. The Meet Ups ran like the programming in Fall 2021, but with an additional week of support.

Table 14: First-Year Math Meet Ups Attendance (Winter 2022)

Differential Calculus			Integral Calculus		
	Date	# of Students		Date	# of Students
During Term	Week of February 7th	1;0	During Term	Week of January 31st	0;2;1
	Week of February 28th	2;0		Week of February 14th	0;1;1
	Week of March 14th	0;1		Week of March 7th	1;2;0
	Week of March 28th	1;0		Week of March 21st	0;1;1
Final Exam	April Final Exam Period	2;2	Final Exam	April Final Exam Period	0;3;1

During the Winter 2022 term, in a given week, differential calculus had two sessions and integral calculus had three sessions. For the Final Exam Meet Ups, differential calculus had two sessions and integral calculus had three sessions. Integral calculus Meet Ups had more sessions because integral calculus courses are the subsequent courses taken after differential calculus. The differential calculus Meet Ups were for students repeating a differential course either because they dropped out or failed previously.

Throughout the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms, the Meet Up attendance numbers are low. One reason for the low attendance in Winter 2022 can be attributed to the transition being back in person. This has affected student engagement within most math courses, which is not surprising that Meet Ups have had the same fate. One future recommendation to make the programming more appealing is to focus on courses with the highest student enrolment in a given term. For those students who are repeating a course, support is available through RGASC Math Appointments.

[Master of Management of Innovation \(MMI\) Calculus and Statistics Workshop Series](#)

For the fifth year in a row, the Numeracy Specialist delivered a calculus and statistics workshop series in Fall 2021 to the incoming students in the Master of Management of Innovation MMI Program. Each workshop featured a mini-lecture accompanied by in-class exercises. At the end of each session, students were given tip sheets and homework questions with full solutions (all materials were accessible online) and were encouraged to visit the RGASC for further math support.

English Language Learner (ELL) Support

[Professional English Language Skills \(PELS\) Workshop Series](#)

ELL faculty continued to offer the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) Workshop Series. In addition to versions in CIN101, CCT110, and VCC101, which offered targeted ‘just in time’ skill development, we also delivered a generic offering of PELS for any students not enrolled in the courses above. Students who complete the generic PELS are eligible for a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) notation on their transcript. PELS was significantly redesigned in 2020 to become fully online with both synchronous and asynchronous components. Students developed English language and academic skills in eight different modules, each with videos, discussions, quizzes, written assignments, and RGASC online resources to support specific ELL-related needs. Synchronous student hours were held once a week to address students’ concerns about their coursework, foster student interaction and help students practice speaking and listening skills.

Table 15: CIN101 PELS Attendance

Date	Topic	Attendance Fall 2021
Sept 27	Strategies for Academic Success	30
Oct 4	Reading and Outlining – Preparing to Write	30
Oct 18	Introductions and Conclusions – Guiding Your Audience	21
Oct 25	Body Paragraphs – Purpose and Structure	23
Nov 1	Analysis and Argumentation – Make Your Point	21
Nov 8	Learning to Revise, Edit, and Proofread – Submitting Your Best Work	21
Nov 15	Cohesion and Flow – Making Sense	24
Nov 22	Looking Ahead – Academic Strategies and Supports	12
Total Attendance		182 (328 in 2020)
Total Students Completed 7-8 Modules		21

Table 16: CCT110 PELS Attendance

Date	Topic	Attendance Winter 2022
Jan 24	Strategies for Academic Success	305
Jan 31	Reading and Outlining – Preparing to Write	293
Feb 7	Introductions and Conclusions – Guiding Your Audience	282
Feb 14	Body Paragraphs – Purpose and Structure	276
Feb 28	Analysis and Argumentation – Make Your Point	266
Mar 7	Learning to Revise, Edit, and Proofread – Submitting Your Best Work	262
Mar 14	Cohesion and Flow – Making Sense	242
Mar 21	Looking Ahead – Academic Strategies and Supports	159
Total Attendance		2085 (1889 in 2021)
Total Students Completed 7-8 Modules		197

Table 17: VCC101 PELS Attendance

Date	Topic	Attendance Winter 2022
Jan 24	Strategies for Academic Success	35
Jan 31	Reading and Outlining – Preparing to Write	31
Feb 7	Introductions and Conclusions – Guiding Your Audience	33
Feb 14	Body Paragraphs – Purpose and Structure	24
Feb 28	Analysis and Argumentation – Make Your Point	26
Mar 7	Learning to Revise, Edit, and Proofread – Submitting Your Best Work	25
Mar 14	Cohesion and Flow – Making Sense	19
Mar 21	Looking Ahead – Academic Strategies and Supports	8

Total Attendance	201 (304 in 2021)
Total Students Completed 7-8 Modules	19

Table 18: Generic PELS Attendance

Date (Fall)	Date (Winter)	Topic	Attendance Fall 2021	Attendance Winter 2022
Sept 28	Jan 21	Strategies for Academic Success	5	3
Oct 5	Feb 1	Reading and Outlining – Preparing to Write	4	2
Oct 19	Feb 8	Introductions and Conclusions – Guiding Your Audience	2	2
Oct 26	Feb 22	Body Paragraphs – Purpose and Structure	2	1
Nov 2	Mar 1	Analysis and Argumentation – Make Your Point	2	1
Nov 9	Mar 8	Learning to Revise, Edit, and Proofread – Submitting Your Best Work	2	1
Nov 16	Mar 15	Cohesion and Flow – Making Sense	2	1
Nov 23	Mar 22	Looking Ahead – Academic Strategies and Supports	0	1
Total Attendance			19	12
Total Students Completed 7-8 Modules			2	1

Attendance in PELS in 2021/2022 was 2,499 (as opposed to 2,768 in 2020-2021) with 469 unique attendances (56 Fall and 413 Winter). This year PELS was not offered in RLG101 and there was a decline in enrolment from CIN101 and VCC101, which explained for the decline in the overall attendance. The CCT110 collaboration with the PELS program continued to result in excellent numbers. There were 342 unique attendances for CCT110, and 197 students completed requirements to receive bonus marks. Responses to the PELS Fall and Winter surveys were positive and highlighted several aspects that benefited students:

- “I am one hundred percent positive when I say that enrolling in PELS helped a great deal in my academic performance...I'm grateful to be taking this course in the same semester as my writing course (WRI173), because not only did it enhance my performance in the subject, but the two added together really forgo the baseless way I used to write, and focus on enriching my language.
- “Because of my enrollment in PELS, I've gained helpful tips and knowledge ... I was excited to see the different types of study and note-taking strategies that we have discussed earlier in the course. Since then, I have specifically used the Cornell, Outline and Mapping method. The results were an improvement of my studying skills, and a more positive approach to studying...
- “PELS has taught me a lot about writing as well as reading, improved my reading skills, and helped me with other classes when I needed to write.”
- “PELS helped me a lot this semester, especially in teaching me new study skills... PELS taught me how to determine my academic advantages, how to take effective notes, and how

to manage time... Through critical reading and some academic vocabulary, I have made more progress in reading and writing English articles. Then, PELS also provided some writing strategies for me to understand how I can capture the reader's attention and make my essay contain gist, support and overall meaning. Finally, PELS uses structured paragraphs to help me achieve my writing goals...In general, PELS has had a great impact on my semester, and I am very happy to choose this course!"

- "The content of the PELS course is relaxed but effective. The lectures were concise and clear, with the complete descriptions and explanations of all the concepts in the course, and some of the content was accompanied by detailed examples for understanding. The quizzes at the end of the class also helped me to further check my learning results and to review the class in time to consolidate my knowledge..."

Furthermore, students' responses to the end-of-course survey in both Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 (n=20) indicated the instructional contents and materials in PELS had enhanced their academic repertoire in various aspects. Respondents testified that attending in PELS increased their confidence in their written English (90%) as well as improved their ability to create accurate grammatical structures (85%), reading comprehension (75%), academic vocabulary (70%), and overall study skills (75%). Additionally, survey responses indicated that students were able to apply what they learnt in PELS to writing assignments in their disciplinary courses (70%), which helped improve their grades in these assignments (70%). Despite this success, the need for increased spoken and listening skills practice and opportunities for student interaction were identified in the survey. ELL Specialists will continue to address these needs through the development of student hour activities, collaboration with the UTM Indigenous Centre and the International Education Centre, and by expanding techno-pedagogical strategies that facilitate student and instructor online presence and exchange. Participating instructors' feedback on PELS has been highly positive in terms of benefits to students and collaboration with the RGASC. Participation in PELS did not skew course grades, and one instructor remarked that PELS operated smoothly as a parallel track of student support without additional work for course TAs and instructors.

In 2021/22, UTM's unique hybrid model of both in-person and online classes meant that many international students opted to stay in their home countries and take online courses for the Fall term with a transition into in-person classes in early 2022. This meant that some international students were not only challenged by a new mid-term shift in course delivery, but they were also facing cultural adjustments to a new Canadian environment. In this academic term, UTM saw its highest number of new intake international students at 1,660, which was 37% of the total new intake in 2021 and significantly higher than in previous years. Of these students, the majority were from China, India, Pakistan, and South Korea where English is not the primary spoken language. These students, along with most students at UTM, continued to learn remotely for a large part of the 2021-22 academic year. While this should have translated into additional ELL related supports at the RGASC, funding and staffing restrictions meant that ELL offerings within the RGASC were reduced, though there were increases in other areas, such as in ISP010: The Basics of Writing in English (BoWiE) which is offered through the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy, of which the RGASC is a part.

ISP010: The Basics of Writing in English (BoWiE)

In 2021-2022, ISUP continued to offer ISP100: Writing for University and Beyond, designed to support first-year students with the writing skills necessary for success at university, this year expanding outwards to support the Department of Mathematics and Computational Sciences, which is an extremely large cohort of students. All students in the course wrote a writing diagnostic in the first week of class. For some students, this diagnostic indicated that they were unlikely to be successful in ISP100 and so they were transferred to a separate course, ISP010: The Basics of Writing in English (BoWiE). ISP010 is a non-credit-bearing half course focusing on foundational writing skills at the sentence and paragraph level; while ISP010 is not designed solely for ELL students, students that took ISP010 in both the Fall and Winter terms were predominantly ELL. Enrolment for BoWiE was higher than in the previous year with 129 students completing the course in the Fall and Winter terms. In total, approximately 17% of students are identified as needing to move to ISP010 and 95% of that population is ELL.

English Language Learner Support Initiative (ELLI)

The English Language Learner Support Initiative (ELLI) has not attracted many applications in the past three years. Two courses were offered funding in 2021-22 including FAH216 and CIN207 both with 28 hours of additional support for ELLs. As the application numbers continue to remain low and students now have the opportunity to engage in ISP010, ELLI will be suspended indefinitely from July 2022 onwards.

Future Challenges for ELL

The RGASC continues to be underfunded in support of ELL initiatives. With the creation of ISUP, all of the faculty who were once devoted solely to ELL support within the context of the RGASC have taken on new responsibilities in ISP100 and in BoWiE. This has left the RGASC to employ short-term contracts for ELL support, which is a strategy that is not particularly helpful over the longer term.

With the creation and implementation of BoWiE, it was expected that enrolment in ISP010 would translate to more students being aware of, and using, the supports available within the RGASC; yet this was not the case in 2021-22. This is a significant problem that should be addressed sooner rather than later. As UTM transitions back to predominantly having in-person courses, there are opportunities for further collaboration between BoWiE faculty and the RGASC in the near future. While we expect limits on ELL programming in 2022-23 due to staffing shortages, it is anticipated that as both the RGASC and ISUP programming continue to develop, so too will the connection between the RGASC and ISUP in terms of ELL support.

Experiential Learning

The Experiential Learning Faculty Liaison continued to support the development of EL programming at UTM in close collaboration with the EEU. In continuing this collaboration the EL faculty Liaison took on the role of Co-chair of the Experiential Learning Groups (ELG) beginning in January 2022. As co-chair along with Rena Banwait (EEU manager) and Felicity Morgan (Career Centre), the EL faculty Liaison took the lead in the development of the protocols that would inform the Dean approved response to the 2020-21 EL report which highlighted a suite of areas seeking support for the continued growth of EL programming at UTM. In particular, the acknowledgement on the part of the Dean's office that faculty would benefit from being provided formal release to develop EL courses or adapt existing course to follow an EL driven curriculum. The initial draft of the criteria to be used to gauge potential applicants for each of the three half-course release opportunities have now been completed and there is every expectation that the format for the application process will be approved this summer for implementation in Fall 2022. In addition to this leadership role, the EL faculty Liaison has continued to support the OHCRIF Linking Skills project as well as supporting the teaching or providing supplemental materials for a number of EL courses and programs at UTM. In the section that follows, details of the form of support being applied are examined.

Experiential Learning at UTM continued to experience challenges with respect to EL programming, notably finding suitable placements for students engaged in internship courses. However, the initiatives started during last year, such as leveraging opportunities at the RGASC to support PSY442 and ECO400, where programs supported through the RGASC facilitated Study group program as well as the RGASC's collaboration with Accessibility continued to serve as suitable internship placements for prospective students. Even with pandemic restrictions being slowly lifted, it is assumed that these internal placements will remain and it has encouraged further exploration for establishing similar opportunities with other programs/departments moving forward.

Collaboration with the Experiential Education Unit and the Experiential Learning Group:

The EL Faculty Liaison continued to work closely with the Experiential Education Unit (EEU) in the Office of the Dean. Last year's primary focus was the completion of the Experiential Learning Group (ELG) report which identified a number of action items that were highlighted by the survey respondents as areas in need of support. The Dean's office responded to the recommendations laid out in the report by initiating a teaching release initiative to help encourage the development of additional EL programming at UTM. The Dean's office committed to supporting 3-half course release options for faculty wishing to pursue the development of an EL course. The EL faculty Liaison, in collaboration with the EEU and the ELG, have developed a draft of the criteria to be used in the selection process with the expectation that the course release option will be in place for September 2022.

The EL faculty Liaison continued to support the development of the OHCRIF proposal with the aim of producing actionable material in the development of the Linking Skills Project. Two particular areas were targeted for collaboration between the EEU and the EL faculty Liaison: 1- Curriculum Maps with Experiential Learning Layer, 2- Reflective Assessments. The mapping support served primarily as a means of verifying the existence of EL-related exercises/activities

across campus. The Reflective Assessments collaboration focused on the development of a slide-deck and general guidelines for how best to incorporate formal reflective practice into an existing course curriculum. Five courses were targeted for the summer (2021) pilot for receiving OHCRIF support:

Table 19. OHCRIF Summer 2021 Pilot Participation

EDS388H5Y	Experiential Learning Opportunity within the Community	Coulson, E.
ENG371H5F	Special Topic in World Literatures: Theatres of Resistance	Vashisht, N.
DRE420H5S	Senior Seminar 1: New Drama and Theatre	Switzky, L.
ITA400Y5Y	Italian Internship	Lobalsamo, T.
ITA388H5Y	Italian Education Internship	Lobalsamo, T.

The EL Faculty Liaison was also invited by Rena Banwait (EEU) to contribute to a study being undertaken by the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS). This study focused on examining the principles of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility as it relates to EL.

Experiential Learning Course Instruction and Support:

The EL Faculty Liaison continued to support ECO400, MGT480, & VST410 as in the previous year. The EL faculty Liaison collaborated with a colleague at ISUP (Christopher Eaton) to develop and deliver a UTM scholars course (UTM192 – Thinking Badly: Misinformation in the Information Age). This course targeted current issues with how science is communicated and included a number of guest speakers from a number of relevant disciplines to help engage the students with direct, real-world examples of how science is communicated. Guest speakers included: Dr. Lorne Small from Trillium Health Partners, Professor Kate Maddalena (ICCIT), & Professor David Mazierski (Dept. of Biology - Biomedical Communications). Additional courses Taught with an EL focused curriculum included: UTM118 – The Science of learning and BIO356 – Major Features of Vertebrate Evolution. Finally, one additional course where the EL faculty Liaison served as a member of teaching team, but was not formally credited with teaching was JCB487 (interdisciplinary Research Laboratory), where the role of the EL faculty Liaison focused on development of team skills for the students in the course. This skills development focused on the use of the Kolb Learning Skills Inventory and encourage regular weekly reflection submission.

Conference Contributions:

As an extension of the collaborative work between the EEU and the EL faculty Liaison, a proposal was submitted to the 2021 Annual International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (ISSoTL), which was delivered virtually on Oct. 26th, 2021 entitled: Supporting Humanities Graduates: Linking Employer Recruitment Practices with Skills Development in University. This submission examined the role of the Linking Skills project which was the central focus of the OHCRIF proposal and addressed the preliminary findings, notably the development of the reflective practice tools that were developed by the EL faculty Liaison.

Reflective Practice Support for RGASC Programming:

The EL Faculty Liaison collaborated with the RGASC's Graduate Student Support Strategist to support the reflective exercise component of the PART submission requirements by serving as an evaluator of the end of year submissions. Constructive feedback was provided to each student. The EL Faculty Liaison also continued support of the Peer Facilitated Study Group (PFSG) Leader training by delivering two separate workshops in March of 2022. These workshops targeted two main areas: (1) an overview of reflective practice focusing on the rationale for its use and how it is applied in the development of the PFSG teaching philosophy, and (2) a review of the facilitator dossier, focusing on the development of the table of contents in a manner that is supportive of the reflective practice model.

A3: RGASC Programming

Head Start

Head Start has been an interactive on-campus event for first-year students at UTM for many years. Situated in the days prior to Orientation Week (Eagle Orientation – previously O-Week), Head Start has consistently provided an opportunity for students to enhance their academic skills while engaging in dialogue with peers, senior students, and faculty. Due to ongoing restrictions due to COVID-19, Head Start was hosted completely online in August 2021. The 2021 event spanned two weeks from Monday, August 23 to Friday, September 3, 2021.

The goals of the event were promoted to students as:

- Discover what is expected of first-year students as active learners in the academic community at UTM
- Identify learning strategies and academic skills that you can develop to enhance your academic confidence and performance
- Distinguish key campus resources that will support your learning and development through your first year to graduation

Another key goal of the event is to increase awareness of the RGASC's resources and support and to encourage students to access these resources and support proactively.

Through an online Quercus course, students were provided with asynchronous videos, organized by thematic modules, that provided a basic overview of upcoming synchronous content, allowing students to engage with as much or as little information as they wanted. The RGASC module "Your Quick Guide to Academic Integrity" was also imported into the Quercus course. Synchronous sessions included interactive sessions, meant to simulate the classroom experience, with content that built on the asynchronous videos to introduce participants to university expectations, campus resources, academic skills and learning strategies. In addition, faculty and students from across UTM came together to offer inspiring messages to students through synchronous faculty panels, upper-year student panels, as well as community building sessions led by student leaders from the RGASC

and the Eagle Connect program. To provide more opportunities for connection and engagement, we hosted drop-in hours so that students could seek clarity and ask questions to faculty and upper-year students about academic writing, math, study skills and first-year expectations. Campus partners were invited to lead sessions providing more information about the UTM Library, the UTMSU, and the UTM Academic Integrity Unit.

This amounted to approximately 36.5 hours of synchronous opportunities and 3 hours of asynchronous content.

Participation and Engagement

Head Start was promoted to incoming students through communication channels provided by the Centre for Student Engagement. Namely through the New Student Website, the Orientation Website, the Eagle Connect pre-arrival program, and the RGASC’s **summer math program**. Registration for Head Start was through the Orientation website registration platform where students were able to register in the Orientation programs that they wished to attend, including Head Start. A representative from the CSE sent us student registration details weekly starting in July and leading up to the event. We then sent these students a Head Start welcome email, providing instructions on how to participate, and enrolled them in the Quercus course.

Students were provided with reminders of sessions and instructions on how to participate via the Quercus announcement function prior to every synchronous session. Participation in synchronous sessions was what we expected based on the previous year. Engagement with asynchronous videos was noticeably lower. Data indicates that participants visit the Quercus pages associated with asynchronous video content frequently but are less likely to watch the videos, in their current form, or watch the videos for their full duration. In 2022, we are planning to revise our approach to asynchronous content to increase access and engagement.

Table 20. Comparative Head Start Attendance Data, 2016-2021

Year	Total Attendance	Unique Attendance	Presenters	# of Total Sessions	# of Total Hours
2016	828	246	26	35	40
2017	1319	287	23	26	14
2018	2698	539	23	24	14
2019	3094	592	33	28	14
2020	3821	328 (545 Asynchronous content)	27	28	30
2021	2616*	625 (717 Asynchronous content)	21	26	36.5

*It may be interesting to note that synchronous participation was higher in the first week of the event, reduced by over 50% in the second week. One factor that may have contributed to the dip in participation could be that the UTMSU hosted several Frosh events that conflicted with Head Start sessions in Week 2.

- Week 1 Participation (August 23-27) TOTAL: 1824
- Week 2 Participation (August 30-September 3) TOTAL: 792

Table 21. Head Start Attendance Synchronous Sessions, 2020 and 2021

Session Topic/Name	2020	2021
Writing and Reading Focus		
Writing Process/Critical Writing	120	154
Deep Reading, Deep Learning	156	142
Academic Integrity – Writing & Research	NA	115
Writing Lab Reports	149	120
Drop in: Academic Writing	NA	57
Academic Vocabulary	NA	NA
Numeracy Skills		
Problem Solving	156	89
1 st Year Math/Succeeding with Math	129	80
Academic Integrity: Math & Numeracy	N/A	78
Test Success Strategies	N/A	83
Drop In: Math & Numeracy	N/A	45
General Skills		
Optimizing Online Learning	107	174
Time Management	168	186
Note Taking	107	186
Drop In: Study Skills & FSGs	N/A	92
Library 101	N/A	67
UTMSU: Academic Integrity Support	N/A	40
Support for ELL Learners	N/A	33
Other/Community Building		
Making the Most of 1 st Year	70	NA
Welcome, Navigating Head Start (student-led)	N/A	237
Faculty Panels x 2	149	121
Student Panels x 2	136	170
Social Hours x 4 (student-led)	N/A	296
Reflection & Goal Setting (student-led)	N/A	51

Figure 6. Head Start Quercus Engagement, 2021

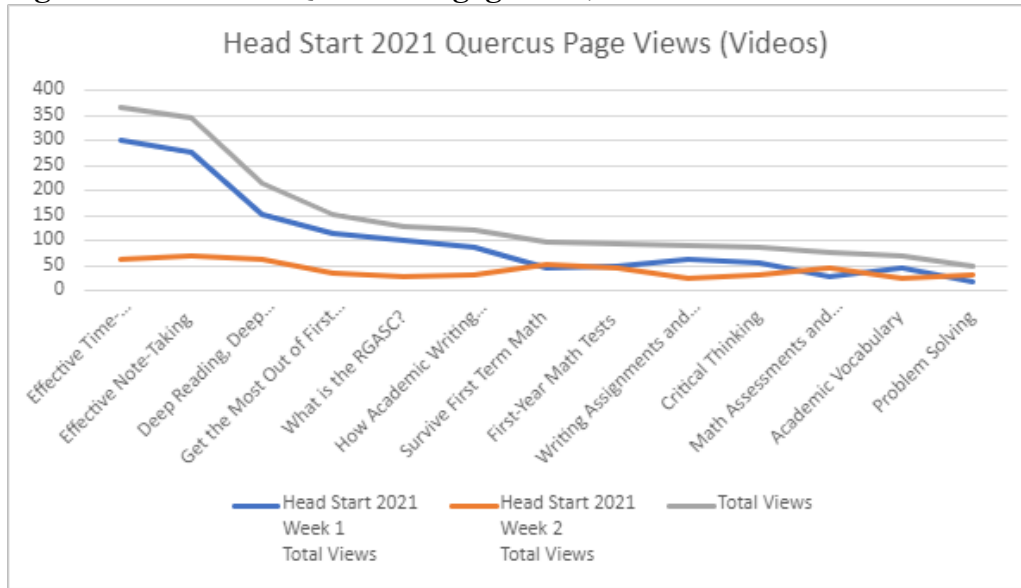
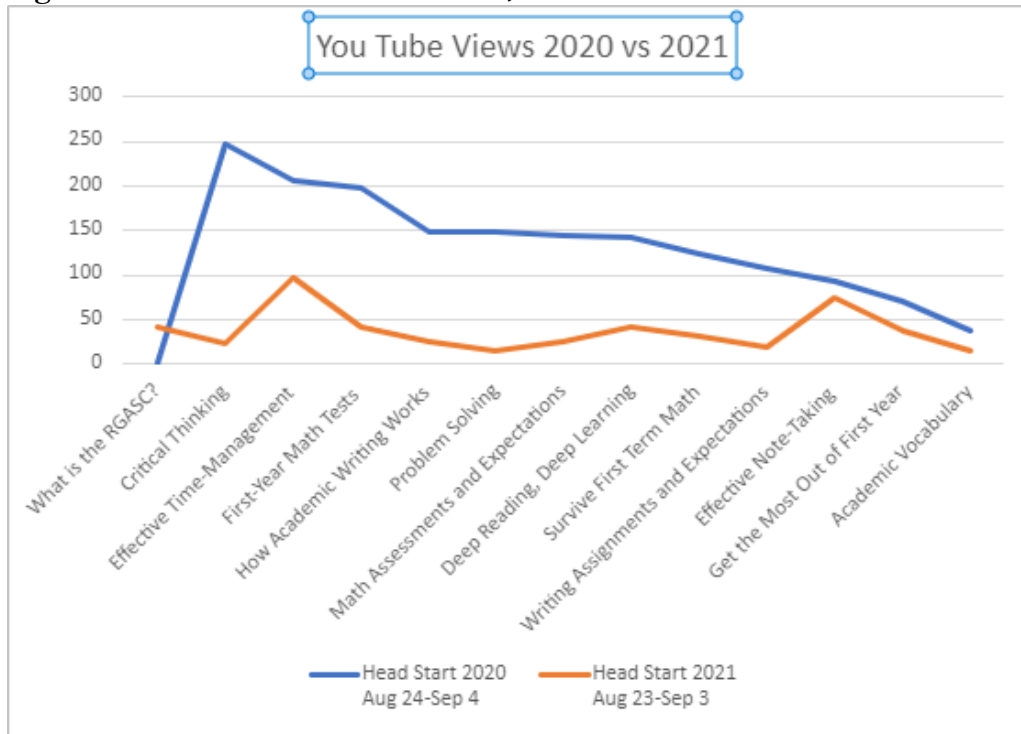


Figure 7. Head Start YouTube Views, 2020 and 2021



Student Feedback and Reflections

The Head Start event collected student feedback and reflections using three methods: synchronous session exit tickets, a post-event survey, and a follow-up survey. Overall, feedback was positive and indicates that the event aligned well with the goals it was designed to achieve. There were minimal negative comments, but those received gravitated toward the timing of the synchronous sessions. Again, these comments were minimal. In 2022, we hope to improve how we offer asynchronous content to ensure it is impactful and accessible so that students who are unable to attend all the synchronous sessions that they wish to attend will still benefit from the event.

It is notable that one area of program assessment that has not been accessed is understanding why some students do not participate in Head Start and how we can reach that population more successfully.

Exit Tickets

At the end of every synchronous session, participants were given a link to a brief exit ticket survey to gather real-time reactions and reflections on their experience. We received a total of 225 exit tickets over the two-week period. The quantitative findings from these exit tickets were not significant, but the qualitative comments do provide some insight into some of the strengths of the different types of sessions offered.

Table 22. Head Start Feedback: Faculty-Led Session Exit Tickets (N=158)

Q2: As an incoming first-year student, how useful was this topic? (1 – Not at all useful, 10 – Extremely Useful)

Topic	# of Exit Tickets	Average
Online Learning	26	8.23
Time Management	28	9.04
Note Taking	12	9.17
Academic Writing (includes Writing Process, Lab Report Writing,	26	9.04
Math/Numeracy (includes Math Success, Test Taking, Problem Solving)	21	8.76
Academic Integrity (includes AI in Writing & Research, AI in Math & Numeracy)	19	9.05
Deep Reading	18	9.44

Q3: Transitioning to university can be difficult. Name one situation you identified today and what opportunity you explored to help you overcome it. Examples of comments:

- There is no set school day in university like in high school, so keeping track of all the lectures, practicals, and tutorials becomes very important. Listening to upper-year students in this Head Start event gave me some tips on how to schedule my week effectively. I will keep a calendar and organize all my classes so that I won't miss any of them and can make sure I can follow through with all the content. (Online Learning)
- Even though every professor/TA has their own set of dos and don'ts, it is always guaranteed to be the best way simply to ask them what to expect and how to behave. (Online Learning)

- Tackling tasks before they become emergent is usually a challenge but this session has highlighted just how important it is to live in the proactive mode. (Time Management)
- The chart where all of the important, unimportant, urgent, and not urgent items were sorted was really helpful to me because it allowed me to critically think about what it means to be in each quadrant and how I should sort my life into it. It really helped me rethink how to approach my university studies, how I should prioritize the other aspects of my life, and how I should reach out for help. (Time Management)

Q4: What concept will you focus on mastering so I can enhance my academic confidence and performance? Examples of comments:

- I'm gonna try to open the camera and ask questions through opening my mic in order to get less shy and more confident. (Online Learning)
- I was reminded of the importance of trying to be proactive in order to maximise efficiency and quality of work while avoiding stress and anxiety. I will definitely be trying to master being proactive and also will be using the support available at RGASC! (Time Management)
- I will focus on consistently reviewing my notes in the evening, on weekends, etc, to try to keep a higher percentage of the information in my memory so that studying for exams does not have to be re-teaching myself material. (Note Taking)
- Upon entering into university I will attempt to master the ability to plan prior to writing. This will occur through mindmaps, highlighting, critical research, etc. Similarly, I will ensure to the utmost of my capabilities that I am able to focus upon deconstructing and annotating the assignment I have obtained. This will ensure that I have a better grasp on my assignment, that I can ask questions to seek greater clarity and fulfill the expectations of the piece. (Writing Process)
- I think one thing I will focus on mastering will be working on my citations and using the many resources available to me (professors, TAs, tutors at the RGASC, etc.). In doing so I think I can enhance my academic performance and be more confident in my work. (Academic Integrity)

Exit tickets were also submitted related to student led socials, faculty panels and upper-year student panels.

Head Start Feedback: Student Social Exit Tickets (N=35)

The best part of this social hour was...

- “The best part was how the leaders were super reactive to all questions asked by new students, the Q&A was very interactive and information, definitely a great time!”
- “I found out that a friend from HS is also attending UTM Life Sci, which was great because now I know someone in my program.”
- “The breakout rooms within the scavenger hunt activity. It provided myself the opportunity to meet other peers.”
- “Got to connect with some people who are pursuing the same POST as me, so that was great!”
- “I liked how the squad leaders created breakout rooms and we got the questions answered from the squad leaders who is in the same program as us.”
- “I really liked the energy that all the upper year students had. They were very friendly and encouraging, and offered a lot of insight.”

Head Start Feedback: Faculty Panel Exit Tickets (N=15)

The best part of this panel was...

- “I really enjoyed getting to know the professors more, hearing their experiences and their wisdom! It showed me that there is really no linear path, and to stay open and flexible.”
- “The best part was learning that even the faculty at UTM had difficulties when they were taking university courses.”
- “I learned a lot from the introduction section. I am trying to find out/finalize where I want to go in life, similar to the faculty members present, so the introduction section gave me loads of comfort and guidance as to what to expect and how to move forward.”
- “I loved hearing about all these personal experiences with University. It helps to know that most professors are doing their best to help students.”
- “The best part of the panel was hearing the faculty members experiences and life stories. It made me feel like I wasn't alone in being so nervous about university and it taught me that I don't have to have it all figured out from year one.”
- “Hearing the Professors' stories about their career paths. A someone who did engineering and switched out to life science, it felt comforting to know that the mentors you are going to have in the next few years also had their struggles and challenges to become who they are today.”

Head Start Feedback: Upper-Year Student Panel Exit Tickets (N=17)

- The best part of this panel was...
 - “Being able to hear from upper years about their first year experiences”
 - “The recommendations of upper year students about distribution requirements”
 - “The fact that the panelists all had slightly different programs that they were taking but they mostly agreed on the answers that they were given.”
 - “Learning from experiences that upper students have been through really did teach a lot”
 - “Getting my doubts cleared and anxiety about reaching out for help eased!”

Head Start Survey (September 2021)

After the completion of Head Start, a survey was sent to all students asking for feedback on the program. This survey was sent to all students enrolled in the Head Start Quercus course on September 14, 2021. With 214 responses, the response rate was 30%.

The question, “What topic stood out for you the most during the Synchronous session(s) you attended?” was created as an open-ended question to allow the respondents to articulate what topics they connected with in their own words. **Time-management was mentioned most often (31, 20.8%) and note-taking (25, 16.8%).** Respondents mentioned writing related topics (23, 15.4%); especially writing a lab report (10/23), learning about campus resources and support (15, 10.1%), and academic integrity related topics (11, 7.4%). Other topics mentioned included math related topics, general study skills and academic skills, and being successful. Interestingly, hearing about professor experiences was mentioned in several responses (10, 6.7%). Though this was not a “topic”, it is evident that this part of Head Start resonated with participants as a standout part of the event.

Table 23. Head Start Survey: Likert Question Responses

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement to the following statements using a Likert scale (5 – strongly agree, 4 – agree, 3 – neither agree or disagree, 2 – disagree, 1 – strongly agree) N=180

I explored practical examples that improved my understanding of academic expectations at university	3.91
I am comfortable with the idea of seeking support from my instructors and teaching assistants	4.12
I know about the different resources UTM offers to support my academic success	4.04
I became more confident about starting my courses at UTM	3.88
I feel like I am part of the UTM community	3.81

One of the goals of Head Start is to reduce anxiety and enhance confidence as new students start their university career. This is a difficult goal to measure but we asked the respondents to “Please complete this statement in the box. **“Before Head Start, I felt _____ about starting my first-year at UTM; after Head Start, I felt _____ about starting my first-year at UTM.”**

182 respondents completed this question and **175, 96% indicated a positive change** in how they felt about starting their first year at UTM after attending Head Start. A summary of the most common phrases/words used to complete the phrase are indicated in the chart below.

Table 24. Head Start Survey: Before & After Word Association (N=182)

Before Head Start, I felt	#	After Head Start, I felt	#
Nervous, anxious, stressed or scared	136	Confident	50
Confused, lost, unsure, uncertain or wary	30	Excited	33
		Less nervous, less anxious	9
		Prepared or knowledgeable	26
		Calm, relaxed, comfortable, or safe	12

Other words used to describe a positive change were fearless, inspired, ready and supported. Students indicated great satisfaction with Head Start, indicating that they would recommend Head Start to another new student. On a Likert scale from 1 (Not at all likely) to 10 (Extremely likely), the average response was 8.69, the median was 9. Comments received included:

- “This helped me a lot, got few tips on how to take notes properly and how to study for test! Was very nervous before but after talking and attending the webinars i felt much better! Highly recommend it.”
- “Thank you so much for taking the time to set something like this up for us! I am so grateful for the opportunity to get to know professors and peers before and go into university feeling like I am ready. All hosts were so inclusive and patient.”
- “Headstart really helped with getting to know the UTM community, the love and care professors have for students, the different ways to achieve academic success and how to implement them in your own path of learning.”
- “Head Start was a great way to help first year students get an idea of what University feels like. Also, the way that the course was on Quercus was also helpful since it helped familiarize students with the platform.”

- “Great platform to build your confidence. I thought of Head Start as my key "back-to-school" item ☐”

Head Start Follow-up Survey (April 2022)

At the end of the academic year, participants were sent a follow-up survey. This survey was sent on April 8, 2022, and again on April 22, 2022, to get input from students now that they had completed a full year of studies at UTM. With 52 responses, the response rate was 7%.

Respondents were asked “Thinking back, which topics do you think were most important as you navigated your first year at UTM?”. Able to select multiple topics, the top-rated topics were time-management (36, 69.2%), effective note-taking (34, 65.4%), study strategies for tests and exams (34, 65.4%), and academic integrity (30, 57.7%).

Expanding on this question, respondents were then asked to open comment about “What learning strategies or academic skills that you learned about during Head Start have you been able to apply during your studies this year? (Please indicate your top 1-3 in the text box)”.

Table 25. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: What learning strategies or academic skills that you learned about during Head Start have you been able to apply during your studies this year?

Topics	# of comments
Note-taking	19
Time Management	17
Lab Reports	9
RGASC	4
Academic Integrity	15
Writing related	11
Using the library/and databases	11
Study strategies tests & exams	12
Reading university texts	8
Critical thinking	3

Tying into the concept of seeking support and using campus resources, respondents were asked what RGASC supports and resources they accessed over the year, and what other campus resources they accessed over the year.

Table 26. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Access of RGASC Resources

What RGASC (Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre) supports, and resources have you accessed this year?	#	%
Attended 1 or more worships related to writing skills	23	44%
Attended 1 or more workshops related to research skills	8	15%
Attended 1 or more workshops related to math/numeracy skills	11	21%
Participated in 1 or more writing retreats	2	4%
Attended 1 or more 1:1 writing appointment	10	19%
Attended 1 or more 1:1 math skills appointment	2	4%

Attended 1 or more 1:1 study skills appointment	2	4%
Participated in an FSG	26	50%
Accessed an online resource sheet	12	23%
Other	1	2%
None	4	8%

Table 27. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Access of Other Resources

What other UTM campus supports or resources have you accessed this year?	#	%
UTM Resource Librarian	10	19%
UTM Library workshop or program	5	10%
LAUNCH	25	48%
Attended TA office hours	40	77%
Attended Professor/Instructor office hours	40	77%
UTMSU academic support programming	7	13%
Other	0	0%
None	2	4%

Respondents were then asked what they would have liked to know more about before they started their classes and what academic skills they could have used more support with this year.

What would you have liked to know more about before you started your classes this year?	# of comments
Dealing with failure/disappointment	3
POST, degree planning, course planning	8
Getting involved/joining groups/making friends	6
Navigating/wayfinding campus (tours)	6
Active learning	2
Non-academic resources	3
Workload/dealing with tight deadlines	3
Writing Expectations (e.g., high school to uni)	4
Time management	2
Study strategies for tests/exams	12
Communicating with professors	7
Course specific or program specific information	2

Table 28. Head Start Follow-Up Survey: Academic Skills Needing More Support

What academic skills do you feel you could have used more support with this year?	# of comments
Writing related	5
Math related	7
Academic Integrity	1
Study Skills: Tests/Exams	8
Time management	7
Note-taking	3
Career	1
FSG	1
RGASC resources	2
Office Hours	4
Expectations (external and internal)	2
POST	1
Lab Reports	3
Reading research papers	1
Feedback	1
Confidence	1
Reaching out for support	1
None or felt supported	3

Facilitated Study Group (FSG) Program

Program Overview

Based on the Supplemental Instruction model developed by the University of Missouri at Kansas City, facilitated study groups are a non-remedial approach to learning enrichment that uses peer-assisted study groups to integrate essential academic skills with course-related material. The study groups employ a wide range of collaborative learning techniques to help students build a structured study routine in order to process their study material more effectively. The essential features of the RGASC's Peer Facilitated Study Group Program are as follows:

- FSGs are only offered in support of courses in which there is active collaboration between the course instructor and the RGASC.
- FSGs target historically difficult courses rather “at-risk” students.
- Participation in the FSG program is voluntary and open to all students enrolled in the course.
- The impact of this intervention on the academic performance of the class as a whole is measured by the RGASC at the aggregate level.
- The sessions are peer-facilitated by a team of facilitators, model students who volunteer or who are hand-picked by the course instructor and intensively trained by the RGASC in proactive learning and study strategies.
- The opportunity for students to attend the study groups is made available at the beginning of the term, before students encounter academic difficulties.

The goal of the FSG program is two-fold:

1. To provide course instructors and their students with a non-remedial approach to learning enrichment by deploying peer-assisted study groups to integrate essential academic skills with course-related material.
2. To provide senior students, who are in the process of transitioning out of the undergraduate phase of their university career, with an experiential learning opportunity through which they acquire skills and competencies critical to their professional development and commensurate with degree level expectations.

The FSG Program operates through volunteer participation from the Facilitators. The opportunity to gain experience in a facilitation role is a key motivator for them, particularly as many of them have ambitions to teach in the future. Facilitators also receive a Co-Curricular Record (CCR) annotation on their transcript and guidance from RGASC faculty and staff on how to construct a facilitator portfolio. Throughout the year, facilitators have appointments with the RGASC's Learning Strategist, Program Strategist, and Program Assistants (who are experienced, senior Facilitators themselves) to receive feedback on the portfolio as a "work-in-progress."

FSG Facilitator Training

All facilitators get two kinds of training: initial training and in-service training.

Initial training comprises 15 hours of instruction and activities, with three objectives:

1. To define the role of facilitators as role models who are aware of the keys to their success and their learning style tendencies. While a TA acts in the role of a "content expert" in a course, the facilitator learns to see her/himself as a "course expert", with meta-cognitive awareness of how to be successful in a course.
2. To present the concept of the study group as the anti-tutorial. Much of the training is devoted to understanding the role of collaborative learning techniques and different learning preferences in building learning networks within the study sessions and breaking the students' cycle of learned helplessness.
3. To emphasize the importance of incorporating a "scaffolding" approach into the design of the study sessions. The study sessions model the process of effective study and exam preparation strategies by practicing study skills and eventually building the students into self-directed learners.

In-service training is offered once per term, and each session is one hour. The objectives of the in-service training are:

1. To correct misconceptions about Supplemental Instruction for facilitators. While facilitators have received their initial training, applying Supplemental Instruction techniques in practice can be challenging. The in-service training is an opportunity for facilitators to reflect upon the challenges they have faced, the actions they took, and how they can improve moving forwards.
2. To develop additional strategies to implement Supplemental Instruction techniques. Based on the facilitator experiences, the Supplemental Instruction techniques are re-visited, and their application is discussed.
3. To share best practices for Supplemental Instruction. Facilitators and Program Assistants share best practices in leading FSGs and working with students (Supplemental Instruction techniques, overcoming challenges with students, engaging activities, advertising strategies, etc.).

4. To collect qualitative data based on facilitator experience to improve training processes. Facilitators are surveyed by the Program Assistants on their current experiences with leading sessions and communicating with the RGASC (resources, use of Quercus, suggestions for improvement, etc.).

FSG Outreach and Program Support

The FSG program continued to expand its model of academic support beyond the FSG program to the following additional areas: Residence Peer Academic Leader (PAL) program, Academic Societies, Exam Jam; Living Learning Communities in the Residence, the International Education Centre, and the LAUNCH program. The RGASC continued to provide Facilitator training and FSG academic support for the Peer Academic Leaders in the Residence, with one day devoted to facilitator training for the 15 Residence PALs every August. The PALs also supported and advertised RGASC FSG sessions. The RGASC has also trained members from various academic Societies, to assist in the delivery of FSGs within their affiliated first-year courses. The RGASC and the Centre for Student Engagement have steadily developed over the years a close working partnership in planning and delivering FSGs in support of the end-of-term Exam Jam (Fall and Winter terms).

EDS325: Supplemental Instruction in Higher Education

The RGASC continued to collaborate with Language Studies to run EDS325, a credit-bearing course that introduces students to the theory and practice of Supplemental Instruction in higher education. The course focuses on the history and evolution of SI, the rationale for its use, current research, and tools and resources that Facilitators need to run study groups. It also incorporates the RGASC's FSG program as a mandatory internship for every student in the course. Noteworthy developments in EDS325 are as follows:

Steady increase year-by-year in course enrollment: Fall 2018: 23 students; Fall 2019: 51 students; Fall 2020: 36 students; Winter 2021: 28 students. (Total for 2020-2021: 64 students); Fall 2021: 28 students; Winter 2022: 38 students (Total for 2021-2022: 66 students)

- All students successfully placed as Facilitators within discipline-related courses
- Winter section to EDS325 added in Winter term 2021
- Division of labour (workflow) established between EDS325 Course Instructor and the FSG Program

One beneficial aspect of the EDS course that had not been foreseen was how effective the course would prove in producing well-trained and motivated Program Assistants for the FSG program. The FSG program now considers enrollment in the EDS325 course as a key factor in becoming a Program Assistant in the FSG program.

Moving Online: Program Changes and Results

A program such as the FSG program is particularly vulnerable to transformative events such as the COVID pandemic. The FSG program has been successful, in large part, because of the intimate, interactive and synergistic community-building mechanisms that lie at the core of its distributed practice dynamics. The following features of the program have been developed through **in-person** delivery:

- Highlighting the effectiveness of collaborative learning that builds learning networks through various formats and levels of small group activities.
- Creating a comfort zone and a “dissipated” learning community structure that helps students process course knowledge laterally and exchange course information mutually.
- Emphasizing the concept of group ownership of study group knowledge.
- Cultivating “alpha” students within the study group and reinforcing their role in building a learning community atmosphere.
- Defining academic success and what constitutes effective study and legitimate study material and then transferring the debate about effective study to the study group environment.
- Using the FSG session routine to model the construction of an effective study plan over the course of a term (distributed practice).
- Emphasizing the Facilitator as a role model who is “meta-cognitive” (i.e., reflects on and articulates the keys to their own academic success)

COVID-19 and the shift to online learning threatened each of these features of the FSG program and required us to continually adjust our approach throughout the year.

The approach for transitioning to online delivery during the Fall and Winter term was to host all FSG sessions, for all courses supported by FSGs, within a single Quercus shell. We set up two FSG Quercus shells for the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 year: (1) a “Student-Facing” FSG shell, populated by students taking FSGs, where we used Bb Collaborate rooms to book and run all of the FSG sessions; (2) the FSG administrative Quercus shell, populated by the Facilitators, for the Program Assistants to conduct training (both synchronous and asynchronous) of the Facilitators, assemble materials for their portfolios, assign Facilitators to FSG teams, give feedback and award grades on session plan submissions. Training was streamlined to be primarily delivered in an asynchronous format, with a final teambuilding session delivered synchronously. During the Fall term, students who were interested in attending an online FSG simply followed a link to the FSG Quercus shell where they could enter the specific Bb Collaborate (2020/2021 year) or ZOOM (2021/2022 year) FSG room for their course.

The FSG sessions were not recorded – students simply joined a live (synchronous) FSG session. We consulted with the FIPPA office regarding policies protecting student privacy when collecting attendance during the online sessions, and we incorporated the necessary changes into the FSG program during the Fall term. Students are able to opt-out of having their attendance collected during an FSG session, or they can ask to have their records of attendance removed retroactively.

We created a series of demonstration and training videos showcasing our training and facilitation techniques for on-line FSGs and shared these videos along with a literature review of recent scholarship on online Supplemental Instruction with all Course Instructors participating in the program. We also provided all Course Instructors with access to the FSG administrative Quercus shell so that they could keep informed about the program and understand the changes that had been made in the shift to an online format.

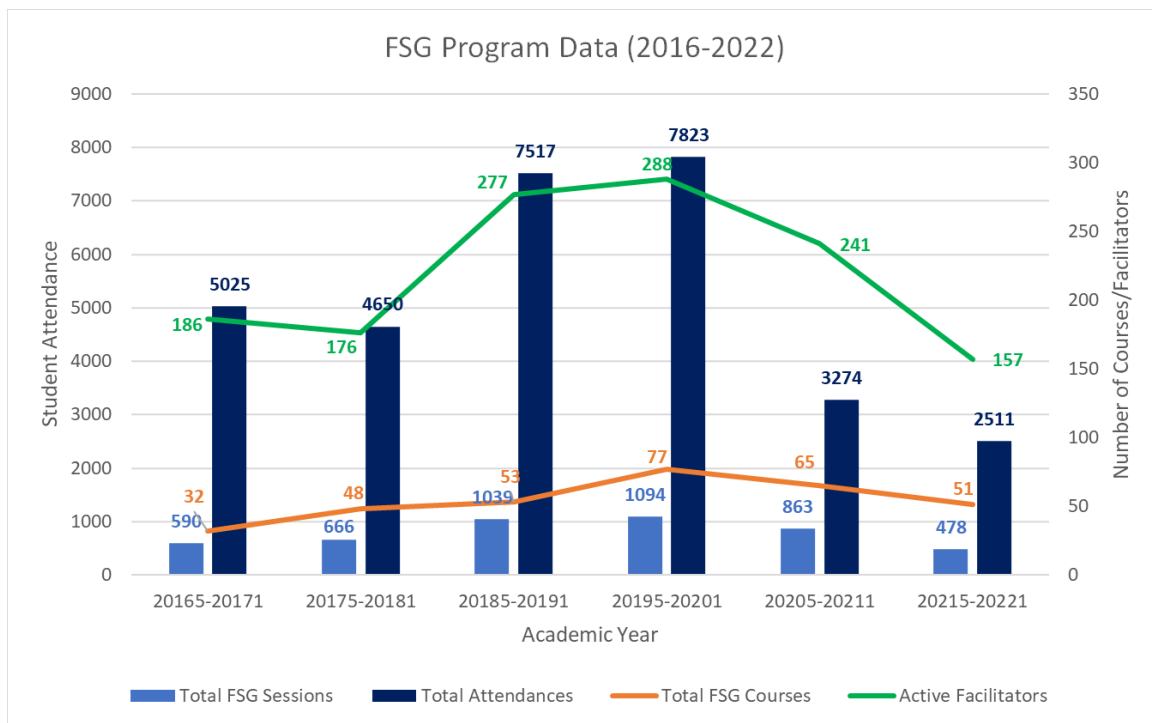
The shift to remote delivery of the FSGs required an innovative approach to attendance collection (from paper attendance sheets to digital records). For 2020-2021, the FSGs were hosted on Bb Collaborate and for 2021-2022, the FSGs were hosted on Zoom. From both platforms, we used their automated activity reports to collect FSG attendance. These reports provided session date, session time, and student name. Then, using a Python program created by one of the Program Assistants (PA), Madeleine, each activity report was modified to remove names of facilitators, PAs, staff, and names that matched the Opt-Out Quiz responses. Although these activity reports only collected student names, we obtained student numbers using the Quercus Course Roster, a downloaded Quercus file which contains both student names and numbers. Using the same Python program, each activity report was processed to replace the student name with the

corresponding student number as listed in the Course Roster. This procedure generated a final attendance report with session date, session time, and student number. It was the information from this final report that was then entered into the ROSI database.

We used the following strategies to sustain the FSG program and encourage attendance during the Fall and Winter terms:

- Increased in-lecture advertising by the Instructor and presentations by the Facilitator teams
- Increased efforts to recruit new Facilitators to compensate for Facilitator attrition
- Increased focus in Facilitator training on engagement strategies in Bb Collaborate
- Recruit new courses to participate in the program. A total of nine new courses were added in 2020/2021, while 22 existing courses dropped out. Four courses that opted out in Fall returned in the Winter term.
- Established regular synchronous online town halls to help facilitators to connect with Program Managers, Program Assistants and each other.
- Streamlined session mapping and feedback on facilitators' sessions by focusing on annotating the session plans (rather than mapping the sessions via iPad application).
- Paired new Facilitators with experienced Facilitators during training.
- Formed a working group with other SI program supervisors from across Canada to explore strategies for fully re-engaging students through the online (or hybrid) FSGs.

Figure 8: FSG Program Data (2016-2022)



Late Launch and Transition from Blackboard Collaborate to Zoom

In Fall 2021, changes were made to the way in which FSG Program Assistants (PAs) were hired and the Kronos time management system was implemented to track Program Assistant hours. Both the contractual and tracking changes took longer to implement than hoped, which led to a delay in launching the FSG sessions. This delay was further amplified (complicated?) by the decision the university took to withdraw Blackboard Collaborate from Quercus just weeks before the start of term in August 2021. Since online FSGs were launched in the 2020/2021 academic year, Blackboard Collaborate was the main application used to both run virtual sessions and to track session attendance. With short notice, the FSG program had to change its training and attendance capturing process, which resulted in significant logistical challenges. One of the biggest issues that needed to be addressed was the fact that in using Zoom, there was now an upper limit in terms of how many sessions could be run per hour, which was an issue that was not present when Blackboard Collaborate was used.

In Fall 2020, FSGs ran from September 28th to December 8th, whereas in Fall 2021, FSGs were not launched until October 18th and then ended on December 7th. This three-week delay resulted in some missed sessions, but also led to the program not being able to capitalize on the traditional momentum that comes from introducing sessions soon after the start of classes when FSGs are often discussed as part of the orientation process.

Improvements and Considerations for the Future

The unprecedented disruption caused by the need to shift the FSG program to an online environment has completely changed the complexion of future of FSG program delivery. Many courses which traditionally had FSGs were not willing to adopt online FSGs and some courses that suspended participation in the FSG program are now led by faculty who are unfamiliar with Supplemental Instruction. The priority for the 2022/2023 academic year is to re-establish relationships with instructors and courses who did not utilize FSGs in the last two years. Also, emphasis will be placed on transitioning to a model of Supplemental Instruction that provides primarily in-person delivery, while also integrating many of the program features that have been developed since our transition to online delivery. This will involve:

- Training and re-training the PAs in the methods required to run and support in-person sessions. This will also involve a decision on whether to return to the use of the Notability application for the iPad in mapping FSG sessions and in giving feedback to Facilitators.
- Reviewing which virtual tools should be used for in-person sessions.
- Increasing the regularity of virtual reflection retreats so facilitators can build their portfolio throughout (earlier in) the academic year and not just at the end of the Winter term.
- Providing more demonstration sessions, continuing to update our surveys of recent literature and FAQs, in order to establish the validity of the SI model, and most importantly, to persuade faculty who are hesitant to continue their partnership with the FSG program.
- Improving the efficiency and scale of the Program Assistant interview and hiring process with quicker turn-around times and increasing transparency in the selection process.
- The shift in attendance collection from paper records to digital records proved to be an advantage, both in creating greater efficiencies in the data entry process and increased accuracy of the student information collected. Systematizing attendance capture (through card scans?) so the program can continue to generate attendance reports in a more automated way even when sessions are in-person should be a priority for this coming year.

Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS) Program

The PASS Program was launched in February 2015 to provide dedicated support to academically “at-risk” students. The program’s goal is to rebuild students’ motivation, model successful behaviors, and raise students’ self-awareness (i.e., to build students’ resilience).

The PASS Program typically comprises a six- to seven-week course (non-credit-bearing) in one term followed by supplemental support and mentoring in the subsequent term. Each week of the course includes the following:

- A two-hour “class meeting” focusing on foundational academic skills (listening, note-taking, reading, writing, problem-solving, critical thinking, research skills).
- Weekly written reflections
- Assessed writing exercises
- Senior student mentoring

In addition, all PASS participants are required to attend both an intake and exit interview. The exit interview includes a one-on-one consultation with a writing instructor to discuss their PASS writing assignment submissions.

PASS Enrolment and Completion Data

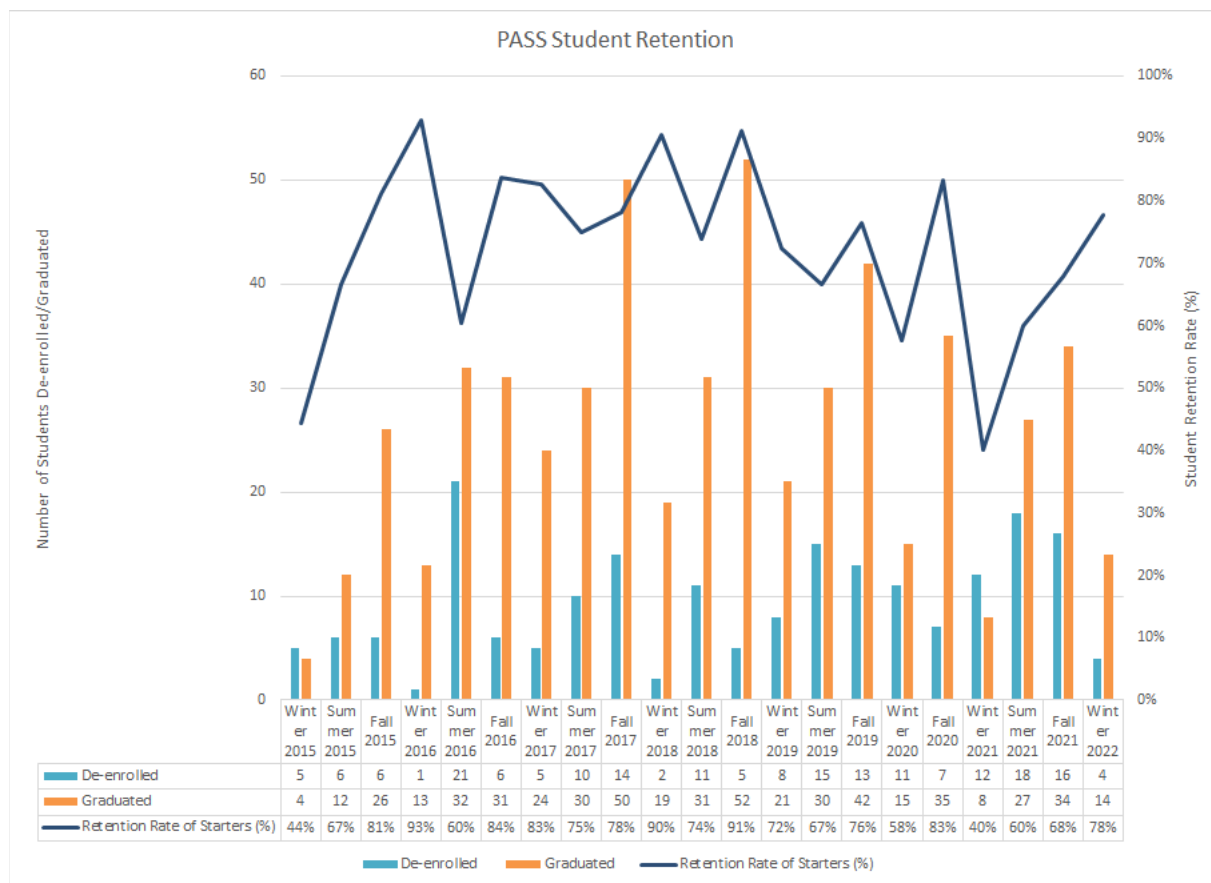
PASS has run 21 times, and the data generated by the PASS program is sufficiently large that the program can be measured for its effectiveness, both quantitatively and qualitatively. One metric used to assess PASS is to compare it with the Bounce Back Retention Program (BBRP) at San Diego State University, on which the PASS program is modelled. The 2011 report on the BBRP compared three groups of students among its at-risk population: students who had graduated from the BBRP; students who had started the BBRP but failed to complete the program; and students who were invited to join the BBRP but did not take part in the program. While 65% of students who started BBRP completed it, the completion rate for the 21 versions of PASS is 74%.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, PASS was delivered entirely online for all three academic terms. 113 students enrolled in PASS and 75 completed the program, leading to a 66% completion rate. In 2020/21, 62 students enrolled in PASS and 43 completed the program, which resulted in a 69% completion rate. It should be noted that the logistical challenges of pandemic prevented the delivery of the Summer session of PASS, which is why the total enrolment and completion is much lower in 2020/21 than in 2021/22.

Table 29. PASS Completion Rates in the 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 Academic Years

	Students Enrolled	Students Completed	Retention Rate
Summer 2020	No sessions were run		
Fall 2020	42	35	83%
Winter 2021	20	8	40%
Summer 2021	45	27	60%
Fall 2021	50	34	68%
Winter 2022	18	14	78%

Figure 9. PASS Student Retention (2015 to 2022)



The Office of the Registrar also considers the completion of the PASS program when assessing whether a student’s suspension status should be lifted. In 2021/2022, following referrals by the Office of the Registrar, 4 students with a conditional suspension lift were enrolled in PASS, 3 of whom successfully completed the program.

PASS Term Two

In 2019/2020, the RGASC received confirmation of funding for a second term of PASS, with the first classes launching in 2020/2021. Studies of the Bounce Back Retention Program (San Diego State University) indicate that follow-up activities such as “PASS Term Two” contribute to improved grade point average (GPA) and persistence to graduation. The additional term of PASS aims to provide continued support and skill development to students who remain on academic probation or suspension after the completion of the original version of PASS (now known as PASS Term 1).

While PASS Term 1 aims to help students to develop the learning strategies and habits that lead to academic success, PASS Term 2 builds on this foundation by focusing on helping PASS students better integrate themselves into the university community by creating opportunities for engagement with staff and faculty. It also aims to increase accountability by facilitating a more self-directed learning process. The curriculum in PASS Term 2 is modular, with students being required to select and successfully complete four out of the following eight modules:

- Note-taking & memory
- Time management & study planning
- Writing
- Reading strategies and lecture listening
- Academic (course) planning and goal setting
- Numeracy & problem-solving
- Academic integrity
- Academic resilience & wellness

To successfully complete each module, students must complete all assignments, submit a written reflection, and meet with a university staff or faculty member who has expertise in their module topic. In addition to the modular activities, all students are required to:

- Attend an intake and exit interview
- Attend a minimum of two Program Assistant drop-in sessions
- Complete a culminating task that reflects on their PASS experience, which will be presented to staff and peers.

Since its launch in Winter 2021, PASS Term 2 has enrolled 58 students, and 29 have completed the program, which is a 50% retention rate. Enrolment in PASS Term 2 is entirely voluntary, unlike PASS Term 1, where some students are required to join PASS as a condition of their suspension being lifted by the Office of Registrar. This is likely to be a cause of the lower retention rate in Term 2 in comparison to Term 1, in addition to the fact that the program is more student-directed and relies more on self-management than PASS Term 1 does.

Table 30. PASS Term 1 Completion Rates

	Students Enrolled	Students Completed	Retention Rate
Winter 2021	16	9	56
Summer 2021	13	9	69
Fall 2021	12	4	33
Winter 2022	17	7	41

Improving Student Contact

One of the strengths of the PASS program when delivered in person was the ability to talk with students about their academic goals and learning strategies before, during, and after the sessions. It is in these informal meetings that some of the most meaningful mentoring opportunities are provided. To increase opportunities to connect with students, both Term 1 and Term 2 of PASS implemented a mid-point meeting (a mid-point pause of one week²), where in addition to the intake and exit interviews, each student gets an opportunity to meet with one of the program instructors to review their progress and goals. In Term 2, this meeting is mandatory, whereas, in Term 1, it is optional, unless the students are behind in their assignments, in which case the meeting is required. The mid-point meeting approach was launched in the Winter 2022 term, but already seems to have had an impact on student retention with the Winter term retention for PASS increasing from 40% in 2021 to 78% in 2022.

PASS Future Directions

In 2022-23, the primary focus of the PASS program will be preparing for in-person delivery in the Fall term. These preparations will focus on training all the Program Assistants to facilitate in-person sessions and to re-acquaint themselves with the in-class exercises, such as the various boardgame activities and the follow-up “study groups” facilitated by the Program Assistants, as most were hired since all sessions were moved online. Also, several modules in PASS were changed in format, length, and content to better suit online delivery. These changes have proven to be highly effective, so the curriculum will need to be reviewed to see how the 2022-23 curriculum can reflect the best of pre-pandemic in-person delivery, while also integrating strong elements of the online version of the program. Another consideration will be whether to keep some aspects of the program online even when the program can have sessions in person.

In 2022/2023, an updated intake and exit assessment will be piloted, with the intention that it eventually replaces the MINDSET Inventory. While the MINDSET has provided useful insights, it is felt that it may not be consistently suited to the unique academic situation of some of the PASS students. The new assessment focuses on the PASS core themes of academic skills, motivation, self-regulation, and connectedness. While the plan was to implement the new assessment in 2021/2022, it was felt that with the continued logistical challenges of running PASS online, focusing on other areas of program development should take priority.

Program for Accessing Research Training (PART)

PART is a research training program designed to prepare UTM students for participation in research opportunities and to provide students with the opportunity to acquire foundational skills needed for graduate studies. PART currently includes 16 distinct training modules and a separate module on preparing for an ROP. Modules are categorized into three types of research methods: Core, Quantitative, and Qualitative. Each module comprises up to four hours of interaction with a module facilitator and a homework exercise or assessment. Modules include both conceptual discussion and hands-on practice of research methods. PART is offered throughout the Fall and Winter terms and offered again in a compressed format in the summer as a “Summer Institute.”

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its associated restrictions, PART was offered online. A Quercus shell housed all the information regarding the program, including the schedule, the links to Zoom meetings, the supporting materials for each module, and the assignment submission portals. The GSSS created the framework of the Quercus course and the module description page for each module. Each facilitator reviewed the description and uploaded the appropriate materials and assignment details. All modules consisted of at least one hour of synchronous interaction with a facilitator, with the majority of modules comprising a minimum of two hours of synchronous interaction. Some facilitators chose to offer the two remaining hours asynchronously, while the majority chose a synchronous format for the entire module.

Attendance

This year, PART had a total of 530 registrants, as reflected in the Quercus course, and 378 attendees, whereas in the 2020/2021 academic year, PART had a total of at least 298 registrants and 400 attendees. The program had 130 *unique* attendees, compared to 103 *unique* attendees during the 2020/2021 academic year. Table 1 compares PART attendance in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022.

Table 31. PART Attendance 2020-2021 and 2021-2022

Module Name	Fall/Winter 2020/2021 Attendance		Fall/Winter 2021/2022 Attendance	
	Part 1 of Module	Part 2 of Module	Part 1 of Module	Part 2 of Module
Annotated Bibliography/Literature Review Writing	32	18	29	25
Conducting Interviews	9	4	3	8
Conducting Literature Searches	29	17	68	34
Lab Protocols	13	11	16	13
Research Design in the Humanities	2	1	0	0
Research Design in the Sciences	16	14	20	13
Research Design in the Social Sciences	5	4	5	5
Research Ethics	49		11	
Working with Supervisors	36	20	21	14
Writing Graduate School Applications	17	11	18	17
Leading a Focus Group	13	10	3	2
Conducting Archival Research	7	5	4	2
Statistics	9	7	6	7
Data Analysis	9	8	5	4
Transcribing and Coding	6	5	7	3
Communicating your Research	5		8	
			4	

* “Research Ethics” and “Communicating your Research” were offered twice each in the 2021/2022 academic year. The numbers represent the two separate offerings.

In 2020/2021, the “Preparing for an ROP” module consisted of two parts, one on preparing a resume and cover letter and one on interviewing for ROPs. In 2021/2022, these two parts of the module took place in the winter semester, and we added a preliminary, much earlier session that took place in the fall semester. This session focused on approaching potential supervisors, selecting

the opportunity, and gaining skills. Table 2 below compares attendance for “Preparing for an ROP” in the 2020/2021 year and the 2021/2022 year.

Table 32. Preparing an ROP Attendance 2020-2021 and 2021-2022

Module Name	Fall/Winter 2020/2021 Attendance		Fall/Winter 2021/2022 Attendance		
	Part 1	Part 2	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3
Preparing for an ROP	22	15	45	39	12

For the PART Summer Institute, the GSSS moved the materials from the 2021/2022 academic year offerings to the PART Summer Institute Quercus site, modifying deadlines and information like the schedule. Facilitators then changed the modules as needed. A major difference between the academic year’s PART offerings and the PART Summer Institute offerings is format; because all modules must be included in one week during the Summer Institute, the qualitative and quantitative modules, with the exception of one, all consisted of two hours of asynchronous material and two hours of synchronous interaction. The core modules, as during the academic year, comprised entirely of synchronous activity.

Because the PART Summer Institute 2022 takes place from May 2nd to May 6th, its details will be included in the 2023 RGASC report. As of May 6th, 254 students were enrolled in the PART Summer Institute Quercus course. To compare, the PART Summer Institute of 2021 had a total of 378 attendees. Table 3 outlines PART Summer Institute attendance from 2019 through to 2021.

Table 33. PART Summer Institute Attendance (2019-2021)

Module Name	Summer 2019 Attendance	Summer 2021 Attendance		
	Total Attendance (Parts 1 & 2)	Part 1 of Module	Part 2 of Module	Total Attendance (Parts 1 & 2)
Annotated Bibliography/Literature Review Writing	58	35	29	64
Communicating your Research	N/A	19		19
Conducting Archival Research	N/A	7	7	14
Conducting Interviews	7	8	10	18
Conducting Literature Searches	53	33	30	63
Data Analysis	18	11	12	23
Lab Protocols	10	12	12	24
Leading a Focus Group	10	5	6	11
Research Design in the Humanities	4	N/A		
Research Design in the Sciences	12	9	12	21

Research Design in the Social Sciences	3	N/A		
Research Ethics	26	27		27
Statistics	36	13	12	25
Transcribing and Coding	10	5	7	12
Working with Supervisors	N/A	16	13	29
Writing Graduate School Applications	N/A	17	11	28

N/A – Session not offered

Note: Summer 2020 was cancelled due to COVID19

Students are eligible to receive a CCR annotation as either a Qualitative Methods or Quantitative Methods PART participant if they complete the following:

1. Complete all three of the following Core modules: Annotated Bibliography / Literature Review Writing, Conducting Literature Searches, Research Ethics
2. Complete one of the following Core modules: Communicating your Research, Working with Supervisors, Writing Graduate School Applications
3. Complete at least two Quantitative or two Qualitative modules
4. Complete a Reflective Writing Exercise.

Table 34 below shows the number of students who obtained CCR for Fall/Winter 2021/2022.

Table 34. PART Students Completing CCR Requirements, 2021-2022

Semester	Stream	Number of Students
Fall/Winter 2021/2022	Qualitative	1
	Quantitative	7

Between 2017 and 2020, PART did not see a steady increase or decrease of attendees during the Fall/Winter term. In the 2020/2021 academic year, the registration and number of attendees increased sharply. This higher number of attendance persisted over the course of 2021/2022. Table 35, on the next page, shows the increase in 2020/2021 and the maintained higher rate of attendance in 2021/2022. The change may be due to the online availability of PART; the program pivoted to an online format in response to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and has remained online since.

Table 35: PART Attendance (Excluding Summer Institutes) 2017-2022

Fall/Winter Modules	2017/18		2018/19		2019/20		2020/21		2021/22		Total
	Reg. ¹	Attend. ⁵	Reg. ¹	Attend. ⁵	Reg. ¹	Attend. ⁵	Reg. ¹	Attend. ⁵	Reg. ¹	Attend. ⁵	
Research Ethics	50	31	23	23	18	12	39	49	n/a	54	165
Conducting Literature Searches	41	21	12	11	8	10	n/a	46	n/a	102	225
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review ¹	42	23	13	11	8	5	n/a	50	n/a	54	182
Communicating your Research ²	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10	n/a	12	32
Working with Supervisors ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	56	n/a	35	147
Writing Graduate School Applications ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	61	28	n/a	35	91
Data Analysis	19	15	20	5	14	7	62	17	n/a	9	65
Lab Protocols	39	18	7	2	13	6	n/a	26	n/a	29	105
Research Design in the Sciences ⁴	45	15	14	5	6	4	n/a	30	n/a	33	112
Research Design in the Social Sciences ⁴	n/a	n/a	8	0	1	0	n/a	9	n/a	10	28
Statistics	21	15	18	3	16	13	40	16	n/a	13	73
Conducting Archival Research	16	4	15	3	12	n/a	23	12	n/a	6	34
Conducting Interviews	16	9	13	1	6	2	n/a	13	n/a	11	48
Leading a Focus Group	15	9	21	2	11	8	26	23	n/a	5	68
Research Design in the Humanities ⁵	n/a	n/a	5	2	6	5	n/a	3	n/a	0	11
Transcribing and Coding ⁶	10	3	19	5	12	9	47	12	n/a	10	46
# of Students achieved CCR Annotation	7		4		8		21		7		
Total # of Students Registered and Attended	314	163	188	73	131	81	298	400	n/a	388	

¹modules were added in Fall 2020

²was called Experimental Design in Summer 2017

³added in 2018

⁴added in Fall 2018

⁵total registration for both session parts

⁶total attendance for both session parts

n/a=module not offered

The PART Summer Institute has seen a steady, slight increase in attendance since 2017, with a slight jump in attendance happening in 2021. This steady increase may be due to students' availability to attend program modules in the summer—the PART Summer Institute is scheduled so as not to conflict with winter and spring classes—and the beginning of the Research Opportunity Program (ROP), as many students are required to complete PART before beginning their summer ROPs. Also contributing to summer enrollment is the condensed format of the Summer Institute; students can complete all the requirements for CCR in one week. The jump in attendance in 2021 may be due to the online format of PART in that year. Table 36 shows the registration and attendance numbers for the PART Summer Institute between 2017 and 2021.

Table 36: PART Summer Institute Attendance (2017-2021)

Summer Module	2017		2018		2019		2021		Total
	Reg. ¹	Attend. ²	Reg. ¹	Attend. ²	Reg. ¹	Attend. ²	Reg. ¹	Attend. ²	
Research Ethics	25	21	48	47	28	26	56	27	121
Conducting Literature Searches	24	20	42	75	38	53	53	63	211
Annotated Bibliography and Literature Review	26	21	44	82	38	58	60	64	225
Communicating your Research ³	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	45	19	19
Working with Supervisors ⁴	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	41	29	29
Writing Graduate School Applications ⁵	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	43	28	28
Data Analysis	23	15	29	40	27	18	50	23	96
Lab Protocols	19	7	32	41	14	10	43	24	82
Research Design in the Sciences ⁶	23	15	39	65	17	12	43	21	113
Research Design in the Social Sciences ³	n/a	n/a	13	4	9	3	n/a	n/a	7
Statistics	17	8	34	46	26	36	39	25	115
Conducting Archival Research	11	7	12	4	n/a	n/a	28	14	25
Conducting Interviews	16	3	24	37	14	7	31	18	65
Leading a Focus Group	13	9	11	12	6	10	31	11	42
Research Design in the Humanities ⁴	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4	4	n/a	n/a	4
Transcribing and Coding	15	7	17	13	7	10	37	12	42
# of Students Achieved CCR Annotation	7		19		14		18		
Total # of Students Registered and Attended	212	133	345	466	228	247	600	378	

Note: Summer 2020 was cancelled due to COVID19

¹modules were added in Fall 2020

²was called Experimental Design in Summer 2017

³added in 2018

⁴added in Fall 2018

⁵total registration for both session parts

⁶total attendance for both session parts

n/a module not offered

At the module level, Core modules and Quantitative modules continue to be better attended, while Research Design in the Humanities and Research Design in the Social Sciences continue to be under-enrolled. As a result, they have not been offered during more recent iterations of the PART Summer Institute. Some students who attended the PART Summer Institute 2022 indicated interest in the Research Design in the Humanities module, suggesting that the possibility of offering it during the Summer Institute should be revisited.

Feedback and Demographics

Due to the low levels of feedback received in 2020-2021, submitting feedback was made a requirement for the completion of each module. Since students who wish to be eligible for PART CCR had to submit feedback for each module they attended, we received 170 individual total submissions from 69 *unique* respondents.

Of these 69 respondents, the majority were in their 3rd year (11-15 credits). Table 37 shows the distribution of students who responded to the survey by their year of study.

Table 37. PART Students Who Submitted Feedback by Year of Study, 2021-2022

1 st year (less than 5 credits)	2 nd year (5-10 credits)	3 rd year (11-15 credits)	4 th year (15-20 credits)	5+ (more than 20 credits)	Unknown
11	14	23	18	1	2

56 of these students identified as domestic students, while 13 identified as international students.

Students were asked to identify the program they were in or the program they wished to enter. The majority came from STEM fields such as computer science, biology, chemistry, and bioinformatics (45). Social sciences students from fields include criminology, psychology, and anthropology comprised the next largest group (21), and humanities students were the minority (7). 6 participants were either unsure or gave unclear answers, and some were or planned to be in more than one program. Each program was counted separately. Table 38 shows the distribution of students according to self-identified fields. These fields have been grouped as STEM, humanities, and social sciences.

Table 38. PART Students by Self-Identified Field of Study, 2021-2022

Discipline	Total Number	Program	Number of Students
STEM	47	Computer and Physical Science	4
		Life Sciences	7
		Molecular Biology	4
		Health Science	1
		Physiology	1
		Biotechnology	2
		Biology	8
		Biology for Health Sciences	5
		Bioinformatics	1

		Neuroscience	3
		Forensic Biology	5
		Environmental Sciences	1
		Chemistry	4
Social Sciences	22	Psychology	12
		Political Science	1
		Criminology	2
		Management	1
		Economics	2
		Forensic Anthropology	3
		Anthropology	1
Humanities	7	English	3
		Art	1
		Philosophy	1
		Linguistics	2
Unclear/Undetermined	6		

Participants specified their motivation for taking the module each time they answered the survey. The majority (100) listed their reason for participating in a module as interest in learning about or improving a research skill. The other primary reason was attaining CCR, with preparing for graduate school as the next most common motivator. Table 39 below shows the module participants' reasons for attending the module.

Table 39. Module Attendees' Motivations for Participation in the Module

Interest in Learning/Improving a Research Skill	Attaining CCR	Participating in an ROP	Preparing for Grad School	Interest in Another Research Opportunity	Other
100	43	25	31	5	1

*Some respondents indicated more than one reason. Separate reasons are represented according to category.

Of the 380 students who were accepted for an ROP in 2021/2022, 37 also completed PART for CCR by the end of April 2022.

On average, students were quite satisfied with the PART modules, rating PART modules between 4.2 and 4.6 on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the “Strongly Agree” and 1 being “Strongly Disagree.” The final question about recommending PART was also on a range of 1-5, with 1 being “Very Unlikely” and 5 being “Very Likely.” The questions and the average score given each follow in Table 40.

Table 40: PART Feedback Survey: Average Score for Module Questions

Question	Average Score
I found this module intellectually stimulating.	4.3
This module provided me with a deeper understanding of the topic.	4.6
The instructor/s created an atmosphere that was conducive to my learning.	4.5
The instructor/s explained concepts clearly.	4.6
The module provided opportunity for ‘hands-on’ experience in terms of research, case studies, or real-world situations.	4.2
The exercises and homework helped me master the module's concepts.	4.2
After completing this module, I feel more confident applying to a research opportunity.	4.3
How likely are you to recommend PART to another student?	4.5

167 students said that they would participate in more PART modules, while 2 said that they did not plan to do so.

PART Future Directions

Given the reduction of Covid-19 restrictions, the increasing return to in-person activities, and PART enrollment numbers, the RGASC and the PART Advisory Committee should consider the format (online, hybrid, in person, or a mix of online and in person) of future PART offerings.

In addition, the RGASC and the PART Advisory Committee should revisit modules that continue to be under-enrolled, specifically, the “Research Design in the Humanities” and “Research Design in the Social Sciences” modules. Renaming these sessions more descriptively might help raise attendance, as would making these modules “Special Topics” courses. Special topics courses have an added advantage in that they might attract repeat students who are interested in continuing to learn through PART. In addition, the GSSS should consider actively reaching out to Social Sciences and Humanities programs via course instructors.

A4: Collaborative Programming

This final section of the Report focuses on those collaborative initiatives that have not been addressed above. Here, we address the RGASC's increasingly important collaborations with Accessibility Services, work with multiple campus and community partners on Game-Enhanced Learning, and involvement with UTM's many different student organizations. Please note that other collaborative work has been identified in other sections of this Report if it falls within a specific program or service area.

Accessibility Services

One-on-One Learning Strategy Appointments

The RGASC offers support to students registered with Accessibility Services in the form of weekly one-on-one learning strategy appointments. Two full-time, permanent RGASC staff members offer this support, with the Program Strategist taking most appointments and the Program Manager providing additional coverage when needed. Appointments typically focus on helping the students to develop effective study skills and habits primarily through modelling. Common areas of focus include note-taking, reading comprehension, memory strategies, test-taking techniques, and study planning.

Throughout 2021/2022, all one-on-one appointments took place online using Zoom. The Program Strategist booked 88 hours of learning strategy appointments with Accessibility Services students, and after accounting for cancellations and students failing to attend, conducted 72 hours of appointments. In contrast, in 2020/2021, 119 hours of appointments were scheduled, and 94 hours of appointments were completed. The appointment utilization rate, therefore, increased from 79% in 2020/2021 to 8% in 2021/2022. A further point to note is that the total number of appointments booked was significantly boosted by the decision to offer 30-minute appointments in September, which meant the Program Strategist was able to offer 30 sessions in September, compared to the 12-15 sessions usually offered in previous years. The largest decline in booked appointments took place during the Winter 2022 semester, where only 5 appointments were booked, compared to 45 booked in the Winter 2021 semester. It is worth noting that the decrease in booked and completed appointments coincides with the hiring of a Learning Strategy and Assistive Technology Advisor by Accessibility Services at the end of the Fall 2021 term.

Accessibility Services Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLC)

In August 2018, following the success of the Summer Academic Skills Institute (SASI) transition program, the RGASC and Accessibility Services collaborated to provide Accessibility students with a series of activities throughout the year to build on the skills developed in that program. This new initiative, known as Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLCs), comprised of a series of peer-facilitated sessions on specific learning skills and game cafés to help build a sense of community among Accessibility students. It was agreed that peer mentors would lead the PMLC activities, and so a Program Assistant was jointly hired by the RGASC and Accessibility Services to train and

supervise the peers. In 2021/2022, the Program Assistant contract was divided between three senior students to increase program capacity through the division of tasks and roles.

In 2020/2021, 8 learning skills sessions, 8 social/wellness activities were run, whereas, in 2021/2022, 12 learning skills sessions, and 7 social/wellness events were conducted. The increase in learning skills sessions and the corresponding decrease in social and wellness activities is related to a renewed focus on academic skills-based programming for the PMLC Program Assistants (PAs). While the PAs have previously helped to plan the social and wellness events in collaboration with the Accessibility Volunteer Coordinator, it was felt that their skill sets would be better utilized in focusing on programming that emphasizes the improvement of student learning strategies and that their role in the social and wellness events should primarily be a supportive one.

Table 41. Total Attendance at PMLC Events (Fall 2018-Winter 2022)

	Total Attendance at PMLC Events
2018/2019	40
2019/2020	120
2020/2021	196
2021/2022	178

The decrease in total PMLC event attendance is primarily due to a significant decrease in attendance in the Winter 2022 term. The Fall 2021 term was the highest for any term since the launch of the PMLC program at 118 attendances, whereas the Winter term attendance fell to just 60, which is 35 less than the Winter 2021 term. One suggestion for this sharp decline in Winter 2022 was the fact that while most students returned to in-person learning, all PMLC activities remained online. It is felt that for students already on campus on the day of the events, it may have been more challenging to find an appropriate space on campus where they could log on to the Zoom sessions and participate in a fully engaged way.

A new feature of the PMLC program was the introduction of virtual study groups for Accessibility students. The intent of these study sessions was to enable students to feel connected (virtually) to other students, as if they were in a virtual “Study Hall”. Each session, which took place on the Zoom application, was supported/hosted by one of three students from the PSY442 Practicum in Exceptionality in Human Learning course, as part of their experiential learning placement. A breakout room setting was also offered, in which a student could discuss their study habits with the PSY442 senior student. In this first year of adding the virtual study groups to the PMLC program, there were 7 sessions in the Fall, with a total attendance of 19 students, and 7 sessions in the Winter, with a total attendance of 13. PSY442 students were first placed in the PMLC program in the 2020/2021 academic year, with most of their activities being focused on one-on-one mentoring opportunities and supporting the PMLC sessions. The introduction of the virtual ZOOM study sessions provided a component of the program that they could take more responsibility for and helped them to develop more of the one-on-one and small group points of contact their placement required within the PSY442 curriculum. It is hoped that the partnership with PSY442 can continue to grow in the new academic year by continuing to offer these study sessions in addition to one-on-one meetings. In 2021/2022, PSY442 students conducted 6 one-on-one mentoring sessions with Accessibility mentees in 2021/2022.

Summer Academic Skills Institute

The Summer Academic Skills Institute (SASI) transition program aims to equip incoming students registered with Accessibility Services with the academic skills and strategies to make a successful transition to postsecondary education. In a typical academic year, RGASC staff would organize and deliver approximately 10 hours of programming over two days during a weekend in early August along with the support of faculty and staff from Accessibility Services and the UTM Library. Early in the summer of 2020, when all university activities were taking place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Accessibility Services and the RGASC determined that it would be better to run SASI over a full week in ten standalone sessions. This would allow more flexibility in scheduling and reduce the amount of continuous time students spent online.

Due to the successful transition to online delivery, which was primarily led by peer mentors and PMLC PAs, the same model was adopted in 2021. The main difference was in the level of training given to the peer mentors by the PAs, which increased in length and depth, with a greater emphasis on mock sessions, collaborative session planning, and training on avoiding ableist language. In August 2021, 22 unique students attended the 12 online sessions, in comparison to the 21 unique students who attended the 10 sessions of SASI in August 2021. All attendees (100%) said they felt that SASI helped them to develop academic skills that would help them to succeed at university.

Mississauga Academy of Medicine

The partnership between the RGASC, the Office of Learner Affairs (OLA) and the Mississauga Academy of Medicine (MAM) is newly formed and in its early stages. The partnership began in late Fall of 2021, when RGASC assigned an academic success faculty member to provide academic support to Undergraduate, MD Program Students, at UTM. Dr. Sheliza Ibrahim from the Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy was appointed the Faculty Advisor for Student Achievement for MAM. This role is specifically designed to support MD students on the Mississauga campus, a support that has been lacking despite similar supports available on the St. George campus. The supports at downtown campus are led by Dr. Shauna Phillips, Lead, Academic & Clinical Skills Enhancement for UG, MD Program students and Dr. Chetana Kulkarni, the new Director of Undergraduate Learner Affairs for Temerty Medicine (although they would assist UTM MD students as needed, their primary presence is downtown). Undergraduate MD students in need of academic support were often referred by Dr. Phillips or Dr. Kulkarni through email introductions to Dr. Ibrahim. Through a series of planning meetings, MAM now uses an online booking system called Veribook. Dr. Ibrahim assigns 6 working hours a week for students to book a meeting request via phone/Teams. From January-April 2022 all appointments were booked through the system and students began booking their own appointments themselves. Although Veribook is efficient, the uptake of student bookings was mainly by referral, but in April a non-referral appointment was booked. As communication and promotion via the monthly MAM newsletter and the OLA website increases, students will be made aware of availability and expertise, thus non-referral appointments are expected to be steadier.

Appointments typically focus on helping learners identify learning strategies that effectively drive their achievement and success. This is grounded in evidence-based learning theories that are discussed with the learner. Outcomes include immediate applications to their performance and

behaviour that improve their study skills and habits primarily through modelling, critical thinking, mindfulness and care, note-taking, reading comprehension, memory strategies, test-taking techniques, problem solving, connecting knowledge, decolonial methods of learning, and time management.

One-on-One Academic Success Appointments

One-on-one academic success appointments commenced in January of 2022. Appointments were 1 hour in length and in the future 30 minute time slots will be made available to accommodate the busy schedules of the MD students. Based on the six appointments from January to April 2022 a needs assessment to determine what kind of learning would be most fruitful for MD students was considered. These areas could be conceptualized in a series of workshop style learning events and aligned with the outcomes listed above. Offering them periodically during appropriate program times will provide MD learners with access to important learning about their understanding and achievement, as well as promote supports that are available to *all* MD students, not only the ones identified and referred. The student appointments thus solidify advocacy for these learners who are in need of direction and preparation for achievement. They require education on metacognition, learning methods, decision-making when applying abilities for specific learning events, social cultural theory and collaborative learning, decolonial thinking, multitasking vs. single tasking, problem solving, and imposter syndrome. The MD learners are high achieving, bright undergraduates at UTM and learning about learning from a scholarly approach has been well received and they recapped the sessions by sharing their takeaways and what they can immediately implement into action. Dr. Ibrahim applies research and scholarship on learning theories and systems of education to the ways in which learners can explore their learning and metacognition. Future workshops aim to offer an opportunity to collect and analyse the learner experiences and their initial thoughts on learning prior to taking a workshops and to continue the assessment of needs and advocacy for student achievement in MAM.

Moving forward, the Veribook tool will be used to incorporate in-person appointments and group learning sessions, as well as ongoing phone/Teams (virtual) appointments (if the software can include this drop-down). Additionally, one day per week has been organized for on-site engagement from a designated space in the (OLA) administrative office in the Terrence Donnelly Health Sciences Complex (TDHSC). Although this was to commence in March 2022 on Thursdays, it remained virtual only. Discussions continue as this requires approval and direction due to Covid-19 health guidelines. On-site engagement is for in-person drop-ins, booked appointments or group sessions. In conjunction with Faculty Advisor role, there are goals to dedicate on-site UTM days to support students by OLA's counselling/support staff and Learner Life Specialists (LLS) as well. This is in addition to the Faculty Advisor academic success appointments.

UTMSU, Academic Societies, and Clubs

The RGASC works collaboratively with the UTMSU Executive, Academic Societies, Clubs and Associations to provide a variety of skills development and training opportunities through UTMSU-promoted events. This year, the RGASC worked hard to collaborate on a number of different initiatives but the limitations of working entirely online proved to be challenging with respect to communication and coordination.

This year, the majority of requests received through the UTMSU Clubs and Associations Academic Skills Development Fund (UCAASDF) involved guest speakers and alumni reimbursements for speaking at events. Unfortunately, we cannot approve these requests as “guest speakers” are not permitted under this fund. We were able to approve only two UCAASDF proposals this year and so did not have the usual level of collaboration with student groups on academic skills development events and activities.

The RGASC did collaborate with multiple UTMSU Clubs and a couple of societies throughout the year on other activities (see Tables 33-35 below) and did extensive work with the Academic Integrity Office and the UTMSU Executive members on the Academic Integrity Initiative. The Academic Integrity Awareness initiative involved an extended offering during Academic Advocacy Week and a renewed effort to enlist professors and instructors to incorporate the Academic Integrity Modules into their course Quercus. We ran an Academic Integrity contest and entered any student who submitted an example of an Academic Offense to a draw during Academic Advocacy Week. Over 93 students submitted a scenario and were entered into a competition for a \$50.00 UTM Bookstore gift card. We also held monthly meetings to discuss initiatives and plan events throughout the fall and winter and we are continuing these discussions during the summer to ensure smooth transition for fall term.

Table 42. RGASC Partnership Activities with the UTMSU Executive

UTMSU Initiative	Description of Activity
UTMSU Orientation Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skills Workshops and FSG training for Societies
UTMSU Academic Advocacy Week Extended Version	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed of UTMSU/RGASC “Six Essential Skills for Success” booklet • Promoted of the Academic Integrity Modules and final quiz contest • Offered “writing” focused Academic Integrity Session • Offered “numeracy” focused Academic Integrity Sessions • Promoted winter term offerings and raised awareness
Head Start Refresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with UTMSU/ AI Office re: initiative for winter term to “Refresh” skills and repackaged Head Start asynchronous content.

Table 43. RGASC Partnership Activities with UTMSU Academic Societies

Academic Society Name	Description of Activity
The Society: Sociology and Criminology Undergraduate Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop: Journal Editing

Table 44. RGASC Partnership Activities with UTMSU Clubs and Associations

Club / Association Name	Description of Activity
UTM Against Dragons (UTMAD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills development and funding for networking and de-stressor initiative
Erindale Gaming Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills development and funding for networking and de-stressor initiative
UTM eSports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills development and funding for de-stressor initiative

Game Enhanced Learning

The use of board games as pedagogical tools has a wide range of benefits. Previous applications of this game-based approach consistently show that students acquire a deeper understanding of the core curriculum content, and that students experience an expansion in their motivation and level of engagement within the course. In addition, games can contribute to the process of building communities of students and promote positive models for social engagement that in turn can boost resilience. Several projects were launched during 2017/2018 that explore the potential benefits of game-enhanced learning on the UTM campus in both a pedagogical and social context. These continued until the closure of the UTM campus because of COVID-19 in the spring of 2020. The rationale for the use of games is supported by four assumptions:

1. Learning is collaborative, based on the Constructivist proposition that knowledge is constructed socially. A learning community will emerge spontaneously, as students collaborate within the social space of the boardgame.
2. Learning is active and experiential. The dynamics of boardgame participation creates the possibility that a high proportion of the students involved will become actively engaged as actors as they become more immersed in the gameplay.
3. Learning is meta-cognitive. The game experience creates for each student a framework for an authentic narrative incorporating self-reflection (based on the concept of situated cognition - that the context and nature of an activity will shape understanding).
4. Learning proceeds through scaffolding. The integration of knowledge modelled within the game and the acquisition/mastery of game strategy through the various stages of gameplay will follow a learning curve/scaffold (based on the concept of cognitive puzzlement – that inconsistency and conflict will stimulate learning and problem-solving).

GEL-Related Activities

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the closing of the UTM campus, all in-person support for activities such as the Boardgame Cafés, the AIRLab (JCB 487), PASS, the CCT 419 Boardgame Design course, Head Start, Orientation, and Accessibility Services were cancelled from March 2020 – February 2022. Instead, the efforts of the RGASC Work Study students and the volunteer Game Facilitators from several UTM Gaming Clubs affiliated with the RGASC were dedicated to exploring and testing online options for GEL, focusing specifically on ZOOM, Discord Tabletop Simulator and similar tools.

Discord, Zoom, and Other Platforms

Discord is a server-chat application that allows the creation of several “channels” that either use text or voice chat. Game Facilitators created several Discord “rooms” to serve as virtual clubhouses for the student clubs’ virtual events. However, because activities such as D&D are often visual or conversation-heavy (roleplaying or finding one’s position on a map, etc.), the student clubs sometimes had difficulty hosting on Discord because the application does not really support that kind of activity. During 2021 –2022 ZOOM emerged as the optimal platform for the continuation of this club activity, as the Game Facilitators experimented with Zoom, with its simpler interface, as an alternative to Discord. However, for the virtual Game Cafés, the game facilitators continued to use Discord to talk as they played, creating a variety of Discord channels for their club members. For future Game Cafés, the Game Facilitators continued to recommend Discord, as it is more versatile in creating different rooms for people to play different games.

Events and Course Support

After an initial period of testing platforms, the Game Facilitators were able to expand their efforts to collaborate with several UTM clubs: EGO (Erindale Gaming Organization), the Esports Club, the Anime Club, and the Dungeons & Dragons Club. Online Attendance at other Club-related events was modest throughout this past year and served mainly to maintain the social connectivity of the clubs. During the Fall-Winter 2021-2022 session, the Game Facilitators were able to use these platforms to support JCB 487 (AIRLab course) with regular (monthly) team-building training sessions, using a variety of role-playing methods to train the four students in the course to work as a team. With the return to campus in the Winter term, the Game Facilitators in the various clubs were able to expand their support on-campus. EGO, the D&D club, and the Esports club collaborated with the RGASC to run an in-person game café during Exam Jam towards the end of the Winter 2022 term. Approximately 80 students attended this event. With the return of the CCT 419 course (Game Design course with enrollment of 50 students) to the campus in the Winter term 2022, the RGASC was able to offer support for the course in terms of playtesting workshops, scheduled before and after the course lectures.

Part B: Support for Graduate Students

The RGASC supports graduate students by offering programming in the form of conferences, workshops, writing groups, one-on-one consultations, and support to programs and departments. All programming, with the exception of the writing groups, individual consultations, and departmental support, is accredited by either the School of Graduate Studies' MyGPD program or the Centre for Teaching Support and Innovation's Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP). These programs offer incentives—transcript notations and certificates—to students who complete the required programming.

Due to the ongoing Covid-19-related restrictions, all graduate programming this past year took place online. This format allowed for more collaboration with tri-campus partners, greater attendance from students across the three campuses, and greater accessibility. With the shift to more in-person opportunities this coming academic year, the RGASC should consider the format of future programming, especially as the Graduate Needs Assessment Survey results indicate a strong graduate student preference for online programming and the online format of events like the GPDC resulted in a significant increase in attendance. Feedback regarding programming continues to be low, indicating that the RGASC should consider methods to obtain more data about programming.

B1: Graduate Programming Research

The continued growth and expansion of the RGASC's graduate programming is informed by data collected from UTM's graduate community. In November 2021, the GSSS distributed the annual Graduate Needs Assessment Survey (GNAS) to UTM graduate students. The goal of the survey is to help determine the RGASC's graduate programming priorities. The survey asked students to indicate their level of interest in a range of professional development topics and their preferences regarding session format, timing, and method of communication. Given the potential for returning to in-person programming in the upcoming year, the survey also included a question asking students' preferences regarding the format (online, in person, a mix of online and in person, or hybrid) of future offerings.

A total of 55 graduate students completed the online survey, a decrease of 36 participants from 2021/2022. All degree types (MA, MSc, PhD, and professional programs) and a variety of departments (e.g., Anthropology, Psychology, Chemistry and Physical Sciences, Cell and Systems Biology, Biology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Geography, History, Physiology, OISE, Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy, MScSM, IMI, Biotechnology, MMPA, Biomedical Communications, KPE, MBA, and Urban Innovation) were represented in the data. The top five topics of interest among respondents were career management, networking skills, data and information visualization, communication skills, and research data management. In open-format questions, respondents additionally indicated high levels of interest in writing support of a variety of kinds, including editing and one-on-one support. The majority of respondents preferred stand-alone workshops and conferences formats; the majority also favoured online offerings. The next most chosen format was a mixture of online and in-person offerings. GNAS answers indicated that the best time to schedule these would be between 1:00 and 7:00pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Lastly, the survey established that the best mode of communication was through the department

administrator and the University of Toronto Mississauga's Association of Graduate Students (UTMAGS).

B2: Academic and Professional Skills Supports

The RGASC offers programming accredited by the MyGPD program (formerly GPS), an initiative of the School of Graduate Studies' Centre for Graduate Professional Development (CGPD). MyGPD offers a transcript notation for graduate students who complete approximately 60 hours of programming (20 GPS credits) and submit a reflection on the offerings' contributions to their professional development. All of the RGASC's graduate programming, with the exception of one-on-one appointments and Graduate Writing Groups, is eligible for GPS credits. Currently, graduate students are eligible to receive one GPS credit for every three hours of programming attended.

B3: Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC)

During the Fall Break of 2021, the RGASC hosted the Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC) as an online event. 19 unique attendees participated, which was a drop from the 57 unique attendees of the Fall 2020 GPDC. The drop may in part have been due to reduced communication; due to a technical issue, the GSSS did not remind registrants of the links until the first day of the conference. Table 45 below shows the sessions offered as part of the Fall GPDC.

Table 45. Fall 2021 GPDC Workshops

Workshop Title	Facilitator(s)
Networking Online	Ron Wener , Employment Strategist, UTM Career Centre
Forging your Career Path	Jordana Garbati , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy
Radical Self-Care for Graduate Student Wellness	Lauren Drouillard , Wellness & Resiliency Counsellor, UTM Health and Counselling Centre Adrianna Michell , Grad Wellness Lead, UTM Health and Counselling Centre
Maximizing your Presentations	Peter Grav , Assistant Professor, Graduate Centre for Academic Communication
Unconscious Bias	Fiona Rawle , Acting Co-Chair, Toronto Initiative for Diversity and Excellence and Director, RGASC
Alumni Career Panel and Networking	Jamie Kunkel , Career Counsellor, UTM Career Centre Yordanka Garmenova , Registered Psychotherapist and MEd graduate Shukri Nur , Speech & Language Pathologist and MHSc graduate Sarah Edwards , Senior Epidemiologist and Epidemiology PhD and MHSc graduate

The second day also included a stretch break lead by fifteen-minute stretch break led by Cindy MacDonald of the RAWC.

Over the winter Reading Week of 2022, the RGASC offered a second GPDC. To increase participation in this Winter 2022 GPDC, several steps were taken. The Winter GPDC was promoted through the same channels as the Fall GPDC (department administrators, UTM Graduate Student listerv, SGS E-news, and RGASC social media including Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn), but the GSSS additionally asked the newly hired director of the Centre for Graduate Professional Development (CGPD) to share the GPDC information with his student contacts, which included students registered for MyGPD. Moreover, the GSSS communicated extensively with registrants, sending frequent reminders as the dates approached, calendar invitations for each session, and links to the days' events the morning of each day.

Informed by the GNAS, the conference schedule was changed to suit students' preference for afternoon events. Rather than holding the event over two days, the 6 sessions were spread over the course of 3 afternoons (2 sessions each afternoon). To simulate the catering that has traditionally been a part of the GPDC and was suspended due to the move online, Winter GPDC participants who attended two or more sessions were promised food gift cards, which were sent to them after the conference.

The Winter 2022 GPDC was better attended than the Fall 2021 GPDC, with 117 unique attendees. This number is also an increase when compared to the Winter 2021 GPDC, which had 67 unique attendees. Table 46 shows the workshops offered during the Winter 2022 GPDC.

Table 46. Winter 2021 GPDC Workshops

Workshop Title	Facilitator(s)
Getting Things Done: Time Management for Grad Students	Kerrie Martin , Program Strategist, RGASC Jonathan Vroom , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy
Informational Interviews	Ron Wener , Employment Strategist, UTM Career Centre
Career Management	Jamie Kunkel , Career Counsellor, UTM Career Centre
Learning from Failure across Disciplines	Fiona Rawle , Acting Co-Chair, Toronto Initiative for Diversity and Excellence and Director, RGASC Nicole Laliberte , Associate Professor, Department of Geography, Geomatics, and Environment, UTM Jennifer Ross , Postdoctoral Fellow, UTM
Anatomy of Data Visualization: Telling Stories with your Data	Shay Saharan , Michie Wu , and Amy Zhang , Masters of Science in Biomedical Communications (MScBMC) Program students, Institute of Medical Science
Alumni Panel and Networking	Ron Wener , Employment Strategist, UTM Career Centre Dan Junik , Science and Regulatory Director of Klick Health and MBiotech graduate Shefaly Gunjal, Manager – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at Citizen Relations and MSc Sustainability and Management graduate Tanroop Aujla , Research Technologist at The Hospital for Sick Children and MSc Physiology graduate Anna Cumaraswamy , Associate Director, Oncology at Gilead Sciences and PhD Chemistry graduate

After each conference, the GSSS distributes an online survey to collect feedback from participants. This year, the RGASC did not receive many responses. Those received conveyed an overall satisfaction with the sessions, variety, dates, and times of the GPDC. However, the RGASC should implement additional strategies to obtain more feedback from graduate students. One strategy is to require students to complete feedback in order to obtain MyGPD/GPS recognition for attendance.⁴⁴ Another is to raffle a gift card for those who submit feedback. The RGASC could also collect feedback during the conference.

Overall, the GPDC has seen an increase in attendance, with the exception of Fall 2021. Available data shows that a high proportion of UTSG students attend the RGASC GPDCs. Table 47 shows the change in attendance from 2017 to 2022 and the breakdown of student campus affiliations when known.

Table 47: GPDC Attendees' Campus Affiliations from 2017 to 2022

Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Summer 2020	Fall 2020		Winter 2021	Fall 2021	Winter 2022
				Oct. 14 (UTM)	Oct. 15 (UTSC)			
54	56	72	104	57*	123	67	19	117**

*Distribution of UTM, UTSC, and UTSG students attending the Oct 14th GPDC at UTM:

UTM	UTSC	UTSG
9	5	43

**Distribution of attendees attending the Winter 2022 GPDC

UTM	UTSC	UTSG	Staff	Faculty	Unknown
46	1	55	9	1	5

B4: RGASC Graduate Workshops

Table 48 below outlines the workshops independently offered by the RGASC this year. Workshop topics were determined by feedback from students last year, the GNAS, requests from various UTM stakeholders, and a review of offerings by partners with tri-campus mandates.

Table 48. 2021-2022 RGASC Graduate Workshops

Webinar Title	Date & Time	Facilitator(s)	Registered	Attended
Learning through a Screen	Sept. 27, 2021 2 – 4 p.m.	Christopher Eaton , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, ISUP Paula Karger , Graduate Student Support Strategist, RGASC	4	2
Using Library Resources for Graduate Students	Oct. 25, 2021 2 – 4 p.m.	Rob Makinson , Library Communications & Liaison Librarian, UTM Library	6	3
Introduction to Python pt. 1	Nov. 1, 2021 1 – 3:00 p.m.	Ahmed Hasan , PhD Candidate, Dept. of Cell and Systems Biology, UTM, President of U of T Coders	11	5

Introduction to Python pt. 2	Nov. 8, 2021 1 – 3:00 p.m.	Ahmed Hasan , PhD Candidate, Dept. of Cell and Systems Biology, UTM, President of U of T Coders Mike Serafin ,	11	0
Writing a Teaching Statement for a Faculty Job Application	Nov. 16, 2021 12 – 1 p.m.	Elizabeth Parke , Senior Research Associate, OVPR Kathryn Harris-Howard , Senior Research Associate, Imaging Facilities, CDRS, OVPR Vera Velasco , Senior Research Associate, Research Greenhouse, OVPR Dmitry Pichugin , NMR Centre Manager, OVPR	31	27
Data Visualization with Tableau	Nov. 18, 2021 2 – 4 p.m.	Andrew Nicholson , Graduate Student Liaison Librarian, UTM Library Tanya Kenesky , GIS and Data Specialist, UTM Library	34	25
Writing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement for a Faculty Job Application	Nov. 30, 2021 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.	Sheliza Ibrahim , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, ISUP Samantha Chang , Humanities and Teaching Dossier Coordinator, TATP, CTSI	40	34
Drop-in Session: EDI Statements	Jan. 25, 2022 1 – 2:00 p.m.	Paula Karger , Graduate Student Support Strategist, RGASC Elizabeth Parke , Senior Research Associate, OVPR Kathryn Harris-Howard , Senior Research Associate, Imaging Facilities, CDRS, OVPR Vera Velasco , Senior Research Associate, Research Greenhouse, OVPR Dmitry Pichugin , NMR Centre Manager, OVPR	8	4
Citation Management with Zotero, Mendeley, and Refworks	Feb. 10, 2022 1 – 3:00 p.m.	Andrew Nicholson , Graduate Student Liaison Librarian, UTM Library	20	11
Editing your Work (Humanities and Social Sciences)	March 10, 2022 3 – 5:00 p.m.	Jonathan Vroom , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC	11	4
From Papers to Press Releases: Bringing your Research to the Rest of the World	March 10, 2022 5 – 7:00 p.m.	Farah Qaiser , Director of Research Policy, Evidence for Democracy Philippe Devos , Director of Media Relations, U of T Blake Eligh , staff reporter, UTM Office of Communications Geordon Frere , PhD Student, Chemistry Elysia Fuller-Thomson , MSc Student, GGE	22	10
Editing your Work (STEM)	March 17, 2022 3 – 5:00 p.m.	Michael Kaler , Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream & Writing Specialist, RGASC	6	3
Introduction to R Part 1	March 23, 2022 3 – 5 p.m.	Thomas St. Pierre , PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology	32	18
Introduction to R Part 2	March 30, 2022 3 – 5 p.m.	Thomas St. Pierre , PhD Candidate, Department of Psychology	33	13

After each workshop, a feedback survey was distributed to all participants via email. With the exception of the Writing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement for a Faculty Job Application, very few responses were received. These indicated that students were very satisfied with the workshops' relevance and usefulness. All respondents would recommend the workshops to other graduate students. To improve the amount of feedback received, programming may incorporate survey completion as part of the requirements to obtain MyGPD/GPS credits (see foot note 1). Feedback could also be incorporated into the workshop itself, as one of the activities.

The Writing an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Statement for a Faculty Job Application workshop received more feedback in part because its final activity requested feedback and in part because it was conceived of as a two-part workshop. At the end of the first workshop, participants were asked for feedback that would then be used to shape the second workshop. This feedback was provided informally through Padlet and formally through a RedCap survey form. In general, attendees were fairly satisfied with the workshop, finding that it provided useful information, offered helpful tools, and was well organized. Those who found the workshop less helpful stated that they wanted more direct guidelines about writing an EDI Statement and more information about how EDI Statements are evaluated or used in job applications. While the RGASC would have liked to provide information about the use of EDI Statements from the employer's point of view during the second session of the workshop, EDI statements are still so new that little such information is available. In future iterations of the workshop, it might be helpful to emphasise more strongly this lack of information, as well as the very personal, introspective nature of EDI Statements.

B5: Graduate Writing Groups

Graduate Writing Groups are informal weekly group writing sessions designed to help graduate students connect to a writing community, stay focused, and make writing progress. Each writing group meeting is hosted by an RGASC Writing Specialist. This year, the RGASC hosted Graduate Writing Groups via Zoom.

The Graduate Writing Groups ran as weekly three-hour online writing sessions supported by an RGASC Writing Specialist. Each session ran for the length of the semester, with the Summer being split into two sessions (May 4 – June 22, 2021; July 6 – Aug. 24, 2021; Sept. 14 – Dec. 14, 2021; and Jan. 18 – April 19, 2022). Students were required to register for each session of the Grad Writing Group and encouraged to attend at least 75% of the sessions. The sessions began with half an hour of group discussion about a writing-related topic chosen by participants. The remaining time was split into half-hour writing sessions punctuated by five-minute stretch breaks. Those participants who wished to have one-on-one support with the writing specialist could book time to meet in a breakout room.

Topics included grant writing, finding a unique voice, integrating reading into writing, keeping up with the current literature, dealing with procrastination, journal selection for publishing, writer's block, imposter syndrome, structuring paragraphs, creating flow in writing, dealing with feedback, conclusions, sentence structure, formatting tricks, when to stop planning and start writing, and editing, among others. During these discussions, all participants shared ideas and resources.

In general, more students registered for the Grad Writing Groups than attended. Many came initially and then stopped attending; while most did not report their reasons for the change, some had misunderstood the purpose of the group, others experienced ongoing, unexpected internet connectivity issues, and others' workload and responsibilities changed. Table 5 below shows the number of students who registered and those who attended at least once during each session of the RGASC Grad Writing Group.

Table 49. Grad Writing Group Registration and Attendance

May 4-June 22 2021		July 6-Aug 24 2021		Sept 14-Dec 14 2021		Jan 18-Apr 19 2022	
Registered	Attended	Registered	Attended	Registered	Attended	Registered	Attended
13	10	16	12	13	8	15	12

None of the students took advantage of the opportunity to meet one-on-one with an RGASC Writing Specialist to discuss their writing. One indicated that she had not been aware of the option, having joined the group after its start and therefore missed the introduction.

A survey was distributed at the end of each Graduate Writing Group session. Three people responded, and they agreed that they found the format of the Graduate Writing Group (duration of the meetings, inclusion of discussion, etc.) worked well. One suggested experimenting with the length of the writing times, an option that the RGASC will pursue in future iterations of the Graduate Writing Groups. Respondents shared important comments, including

- “Hearing others' thoughts and feelings helped me feel less alone in my concerns or was helpful to build on my own skills with what others found helpful.”
- “My comfort level with academic writing” (in response to a question about what had changed after completing the Graduate Writing Group)
- “I really liked the 30-5-30 model used in writing group and was pleased with how having a set time and day on my calendar each week helped me plan the writing I needed to do throughout the semester”
- “Great experience!”
- “Great! I am glad I joined. I had been putting it off for a few semesters because of the commitment requirement but am really glad I did. It's a a nice excuse on the calendar to ensure I am reaching my writing goals and not getting bogged down by other items.” (*sic*)
- “Please keep doing this group, it has had such a positive influence on my academic work and growth.”

The RGASC will continue to offer the Graduate Writing Group virtually over the Summer 2022 semester.

B6: Grad Chats

Due to the ongoing and increasing feelings of isolation resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the GSSS worked with the University of Toronto Mississauga Association of Graduate Students (UTMAGS) to offer an informal, drop-in virtual space where graduate students could connect with colleagues, learn about resources at UTM, and meet members of the UTM community. To make the space more dynamic and offer an alternative to Zoom, the space was created through Gather.Town. Meetings were held bimonthly, and guests from the UTM community were invited for most meetings.

The GSSS and a member of UTMAGS were present at every meeting. Table 6 below shows the schedule and attendance.

Table 50. Grad Chats Schedule and Attendance

Date	Topic	Invited Guest	Attendance
Oct. 7, 2021	Welcome	n/a	0
Oct. 21, 2021	“Being a Grad Student”	Bryan Stewart, Vice Dean, Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs	3
Nov. 4, 2021	“Netflix and Chow”	Kimberly Green, HCC Dietitian	1
Nov. 18, 2021	“Cultivating Caring Communities”	Adrianna Michell, HCC Wellness Grad Lead	1
Dec. 2, 2021	Copyright	Scholarly Communications and Liaison Librarian, UTM Library	0
Dec. 16, 2021	Destress!	n/a	0

Due to low attendance, UTMAGS suggested putting Grad Chats on hiatus during the winter semester. They suggested that attendance might improve should the event happen in person and be accompanied by coffee and snacks. Consequently, they hope to resume Grad Chats in person in 2023, should in-person events be possible.

B7: One-on-One Appointments for Graduate Students

Graduate students have the opportunity to meet with RGASC faculty one-on-one for writing support. RGASC faculty conducted a total of 79 appointments with UTM-affiliated graduate students in 2021/2022. Appointments for graduate students included topics related to grant applications, course work, and preparing for a PhD examination.

Some students chose to meet directly with the GSSS. Four students made appointments over the course of the year. Two did not come to the meeting, while two did; these wanted to discuss resources to address specific challenges that had arisen as they completed their graduate degrees, including registration concerns and program progression.

The RGASC provides supports for undergraduate students applying to graduate school. Because these appointments are more complicated and take much longer than typical face-to-face consultations with undergrads, we try to book these manually with faculty members who have experience providing this kind of support. Rather than the 30 minutes allocated for a normal appointment, we allow a full hour for graduate school applications. Moreover, most students meet with an instructor more than once to discuss their personal statement or letter of intent. This year, RGASC faculty conducted a total of 140 hour-long appointments on undergraduate students’ graduate school applications. A number of other students (we don’t know precisely how many) were unaware of the option to book longer appointments and used the standard appointments in WOnline to get feedback on their graduate school applications.

B8: Graduate Programming with the Vice-Dean, Graduate

The GSSS continues to work closely and regularly with the Vice-Dean, Graduate to support the Office of the Dean's priorities and to ensure the graduate student support provided by the RGASC aligns with these priorities. This work includes maintaining an up-to-date [Graduate Events Calendar](#), which is hosted on the Office of the Dean's website and includes both department-specific events and those events open to all graduate students. This past year, the GSSS collaborated with the Office of the Vice Dean, Graduate to offer two information sessions, one geared toward undergraduate students about graduate studies ("Virtual Coffee with the Vice-Dean, Graduate", October 12, 2021) and one geared toward graduate students ("Being a Graduate Student", October 21, 2021). This latter was part of the Grad Chats series. The GSSS also supported the "From PhD to Life: Career Path Advice and Planning Outside of Academia" session with Jennifer Polk on October 28, 2021.

B9: Teaching Assistant's Training Program (TATP)

The RGASC works in partnership with the Teaching Assistants' Training Program (TATP), a tri-campus training program for any student working as a teaching assistant at the University of Toronto. TATP provides certification of professional teaching development and supports departments in their efforts to provide general training for TAs, especially new TAs and TAs teaching in new contexts. In previous years, the RGASC hosted TATP's extensive training days at the beginning of each semester at the UTM campus. Due to the ongoing Covid-19-related restrictions, TATP hosted an Online TA Week this year. The RGASC collaborated with TATP during the Online TA Week to offer a session titled *TAing at the University of Toronto Mississauga*. The session was co-facilitated by the RGASC's GSSS and TATP's UTM Liaison.

Plans were made to offer two other teaching-related sessions with the TATP UTM Liaison. One was a Grad Chats focused on teaching; because Grad Chats went on hiatus, this event was cancelled. The other was imagined as a workshop about a special topic in teaching. The low participation of students in other workshops and general Zoom fatigue ultimately led to the decision to postpone this workshop.

B10: Future Priorities for Graduate Support

The ongoing Covid-19-restrictions resulted in all UTM graduate programming being offered online. This format provided opportunities for greater tri-campus collaboration and increased accessibility for students, as well as an increase in online resources from the RGASC and programming partners. However, many complained of Zoom fatigue and feelings of isolation, and in the case of some programming, attendance was less than expected. Nonetheless, GNAS respondents indicated that they favoured online offerings. Going forward, the GNAS should consider the format of program delivery, perhaps choosing to offer a mixture of in-person and online programming.

Feedback from graduate students continues to be low. The GSSS should continue to explore strategies for obtaining data to evaluate graduate programming. Offering a version of Grad Chats is potentially a good way to get informal feedback about student needs; the GSSS should continue to collaborate with UTMAGS with respect to this programming.

Part C: Support for Faculty

C1: Educational Development

Educational Development as a field aims to enhance the work of colleges and universities, by helping them “function effectively as teaching and learning communities” (Felten, Kalish, Pingree, & Plank, 2007, p. 93). Educational Developers work at different levels (individual, program, and institutional) and with different audiences (graduate students, sessional instructors, faculty, librarians, staff, postdocs, administrators, etc.), but community building around a shared commitment to teaching and learning is the core of our work.

Educational developers have played a vital role in ensuring continuity of support for instructors and have contributed to maintaining quality educational experiences for students throughout the uncertainties and rapid changes brought on by the pandemic (Debelius & Mooney, 2020; McGowan & Felten, 2021). The pandemic has highlighted the multifaceted roles that educational developers play within institutions and the importance of the community building work that educational developers contribute.

One of the most important ways the Educational Development team contributes to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning at UTM is through consultations with individual instructors. We acknowledge the ethical responsibilities that come with these consultations which often involve sensitive information. As a team we adhere to ethical guidelines aligned with those developed by the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD). The following ethical guidelines are foundational parts of our praxis:

- maintain the confidentiality of all details related to individual consultations;
- engage in reflective and self-critical practice to develop an awareness of our belief systems, values, and biases;
- continually seek out knowledge, skills, and resources to expand our practice;
- act with humility and consult others when lack the knowledge, experience, or training to address a consultation request;
- respect values, attitudes, and opinions different from our own;
- use a trauma-informed approach that prioritizes safety, trust, transparency, peer support, collaboration, choice, and empowerment; and
- demonstrate an awareness of the complex power relationships that exist within higher education and actively work toward greater equity, access, and inclusion for all.

Individual Consultations

In 2021/2022, the Educational Development team supported instructors in over 200 individual consultations. These consultations do not include those related to the WDI, ELLI, or NDI performed by other members of the RGASC team. They also do not include consultations conducted during the drop-in sessions that were offered to instructors at the beginning of the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms in collaboration with the UTM Library & Instructional Technologies Team and I&ITS. One-third of all consults required two or three subsequent meetings, which

demonstrates the complexity of some pedagogical issues and the continual work needed to support instructors with teaching and learning.

Consultations by Term

This year our consultation requests were more consistent with patterns we noted pre-pandemic. We received the largest number of consultation requests in the winter term (43%), followed by the fall term (31%). The fewest consultation requests were received in the summer term (26%). These term patterns also align with topic patterns. For example, the majority of the teaching dossier consultations were received over the summer and two-thirds of our teaching observation requests were received in the Winter 2022 term, with the remaining third occurring in the Fall 2021 term. We received no teaching observation requests over the summer.

Consultations by Topic

Topics for individual consultations included accessible and inclusive pedagogy, active learning classroom support, assessment and academic integrity, course design, curriculum mapping and renewal, teaching dossiers, learning activities, syllabus design, teaching and learning grants, and scholarship of teaching and learning projects. Adapting pedagogical approaches for different modes of delivery were discussed across many of these categories. Assessment and academic integrity (19% of all consultations) was the most common consultation topic, followed by course design (13%), scholarship of teaching and learning (13%), learning activities (11%), and teaching and learning grant applications (10%).

Consultations by Department

The RGASC supported instructors across departments at UTM. Instructors from Mathematics and Computational Sciences, Anthropology, Management, and ISUP most often sought one-on-one consultations focused on pedagogical support. The RGASC provided pedagogical support to one instructor from Economics and one from Sociology. We did not receive any one-on-one pedagogical consultation requests from instructors in Chemical and Physical Sciences this year. We note that these three departments might be strategic places to begin our outreach efforts during the 2022/23 academic year. We also received relatively few consultation requests from Psychology, Philosophy, Visual Studies, and English and Drama, so these might also be good places to focus outreach and more actively promote our services.

Teaching Observations

The RGASC Educational Developers conducted 12 teaching observations for UTM instructors this year. Each teaching observation consisted of a pre-observation meeting, a teaching observation either for one or two hours, and a post-observation consultation meeting where feedback was

provided along with formative questions to help guide the instructor's or teaching assistant's pedagogy. This feedback averaged two to four pages in length.

Instructional Support Portal

The majority of the consultation requests (94%) received by the RGASC Educational Development team came via personal emails to individual Educational Developers. The remaining six percent were received through the UTM Instructional Support Portal. We believe that due to the relational nature of educational development work and the importance of building and sustaining trustworthiness (Little & Green, 2022), instructors will continue to feel most comfortable reaching out to specific members of the Educational Development team via email as a first point of contact. Confidentiality is foundational to our work as meaningful consultations often require significant vulnerability on the part of instructors. We acknowledge that given the vulnerability that our consultations often involve, instructors may not feel comfortable submitting requests to a ticketing system with unknown recipients and which will be vetted by folk who are not part of the educational development team. We believe that the Instructional Support Portal can work as a resource for instructors who have not worked with the Educational Development team before and appreciate the way it helps streamline a collaborative referral process between the Instructional Technology Support team, the Information & Instructional Technology team, and the Educational Development team.

UTM Summer Camp for Instructors

In collaboration with the UTM Dean's Office, the RGASC Educational Developers offered a four-day summer institute called UTM Instructor Summer Camp. Summer Camp was initially developed to help instructors with the shift to remote teaching in the summer of 2020. This year with some instructors beginning to return to in-person teaching, Summer Camp was adapted to support courses taught in all modalities.

UTM Instructor Summer camp combined synchronous and asynchronous delivery of content and activities to model for instructors the kinds of experiences they could encounter in their own course facilitation. The UTM Summer Camp was offered in July 2021. Participants were given continued access to a course shell and resources through the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms.

Another iteration of the summer camp design specifically for sessional instructors was offered at the end of August. To make the session more accessible to sessional instructors who often face time and scheduling pressure, the timing for this session was decided by participants and two synchronous offerings were presented. The Summer Camp for Sessional Instructors consisted of asynchronous resources and a brief webinar designed to provide immediate and personalized strategies.

Invited Presentations and Requested Resources

With the return to in-person workshop delivery and dual delivery options, the Director of the Career Centre asked an educational developer to support the Career Counsellors and Employment Strategists on dual delivery options tailored to the Career Centre workshop offerings. The educational developer provided a workshop on dual delivery strategies and also provided resources to support dual delivery workshop design.

During the Summer 2021 term, the Educational Developers contributed to UTM's New Faculty Orientation. They also contributed a micro-workshop on learning myths and misconceptions to the teaching support section of the New Faculty and Librarian Orientation organized by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life.

Educational Developer Outreach and Service work

The Educational Developers also support service roles within the educational developer field, in post-secondary academic societies, and within committee work at UTM to support various aspects of teaching and learning. A member of the Educational Development team is the current Chair of the UTM Institutes EDI Committee. They contribute to the Council of Ontario Educational Developers (COED) by participating in the COED accessibility and curriculum communities of practice, co-facilitating a reading group, and co-facilitating Action Learning Sets. An education developer also contributes to the Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education (UDLHE) Special Interest Group leadership. The RGASC Educational developers also facilitated workshops at the University of Toronto Teaching and Learning Symposium and the Digital Pedagogy Institute.

C2: Teaching & Learning Collaboration (TLC)

This year there were a total of 285 attendances with 189 unique participants at TLC sessions. The individuals who participated in these events represented 64 departments and service areas from across the three campuses that make up the University of Toronto.

Sessions were developed to align with each of the five strategic priorities for the Teaching and Learning Collaboration that were collaboratively developed by UTM Dean's Office and the RGASC Educational Developers. These five strategic priorities were:

1. Support the development of foundational understandings of teaching and learning, with emphasis on assessment and student engagement;
2. Advance equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI), and decolonization and indigenization of higher education;
3. Support instructor wellness through supportive community and thereby support instructor capacity to care for students;
4. Expand understandings of teaching as scholarly work; and
5. Provide programming that is accessible to all members of the teaching and learning community at UTM, with particular attention paid to sessional instructors.

Table 51. TLC Workshops and Webinars, 2021-2022

Workshop or Webinar Title	Date & Time	Registered	Attended
A Learner-Centered Approach to Course Design (online)	June, 15 2021 from 2:00 - 3:30pm	34	32
Inclusive Pedagogical Considerations for 2SLGBTQ+ Students (online)	June 24, 2021 from 1:00 - 3:00pm	63	36
Summer Camp for Instructors: Prepare for Fall Term (online)	July 19 - July 22, 2021 from 10:00am - 12:00pm	43	33
Preparing to Teach: Inspiration and Suggestions for Using Quercus	August 18, 2021 from 10:00am - 11:30am	56	30
Summer Camp for Sessional Instructors: Prepare for Fall Term (online)	August 31, 2021 from 9-10am and 4-5pm	36	17
UTM Ready, Set, Teach (online)	September 1st from 10am - 12pm	33	21
Preparing to Teach: Syllabus Clinic (online)	September 1, 2021 from 1:00-2:00pm	11	11
Equity in my discipline: Social Science & STEM (online)	October 5, 2021 from 11:00am - 12:00pm	21	17
Equity in my discipline: Management & Economics and Arts & Humanities (online)	October 25, 2021 from 11:30am- 12:30pm	15	11
Term-End Reflection (online)	December 7th from 11:00am - 12:30pm	12	9
Spotlight on Teaching in the Arts and Humanities (online)	January 26th from 2:00pm - 3:00pm	12	8
Spotlight on Teaching in Social Science (online)	February 17th from 2:00pm - 3:00pm	11	5
Spotlight on Teaching in STEM (online)	March 1, 2022 from 2:00-3:30pm	28	18
Preparing the Teaching Dossier (online)	March 24, 2022 from 1:00-3:00pm	14	9
Writing an EDI Statement for your Teaching Dossier (online)	March 29, 2022 from 11:00am-12:00pm	9	3
Beyond Fill in the Blanks: Reconciliation, Indigenization, and Decolonization in the Context of Higher Education (online)	March 30, 2022 from 2:00-3:00pm	58	27

The Teaching & Learning Collaboration thanks the following contributors to this year's programming:

Nythalah Baker, Director, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Martha Balaguera, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Kenneth Berry, Instructional Technologies Specialist, UTM Library

Allison Burgess, Director, Sexual & Gender Diversity Office

Angie Cappiello, Instructional Technologies Specialist, UTM Library

Jordan Carrier, Coordinator, Indigenous Programming, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office

Ken Derry, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Historical Studies

Alison Dias, Multimedia and Classroom Technology Specialist, Event & Classroom Experience, Information & Instructional Technology

Tee Duke, Assistant Director, Indigenous Initiatives, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office

Jerry Flores, Assistant Professor, Sociology

Jermaine Ingram, Coordinator, Classroom Operations, Event & Classroom Experience, Information & Instructional Technology

Sonia Kang, Associate Professor, Management, Canada Research Chair in Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Anjuli Raza Kolb, Associate Professor, English and Drama

Simone Laughton, Head, Library & Instructional Technologies, UTM Library

Danielle Lorenz, Department of Educational Policy Studies, University of Alberta

Kate Maddalena, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute of Communication, Culture, Information & Technology

Robert Martins, Manager, Event and Classroom Experience Event & Classroom Experience, Information & Instructional Technology

Matthew O'Reilly, Coordinator, Events and Design, Event & Classroom Experience, Information & Instructional Technology

Mike Pawliuk, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, CLTA, Mathematical & Computational Sciences

Andrew Petersen, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences

Alexander Rennet, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences

Sarah Seeley, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy

Suraj Sharma, Multimedia & Classroom Technology Specialist, Event & Classroom Experience, Information & Instructional Technology

Alison Smith, Assistant Professor, Political Science

Jessica Tabak, Indigenous Student Support Specialist, Indigenous Initiatives, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Office

Jaimal Thind, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Mathematical & Computational Sciences

Anna Thomas, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Drama

Pooja Vashisth, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, CLTA, Mathematical & Computational Sciences

Vera Velasco, co-founder of Filipinos in Canada - Academics, Researchers and Scholars (FiCARS) association

Ellyn Walker, Acting Director/Curator, Blackwood Gallery, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Visual Studies

Otto Yung, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Management

Tingting Zhu, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Geography, Geomatics and Environment & Department of Mathematical and Computational Sciences

C3: Instructor Drop-in Sessions

The RGASC's Educational Developers co-facilitated drop-in instructor support webinars with members of the Library Instructional Technology team and I&ITS. The drop-ins were hosted on Zoom and allowed faculty, instructors, staff, and graduate students to ask questions about pedagogy, assessment, or technology related to remote teaching. The one-hour instructor support drop-ins were offered once a week for the first four weeks of both the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms. Instructor support drop-ins were also offered as part of the Summer Camp for UTM Instructors and at the conclusion of UTM's Ready, Set, Teach Day. A total of 10 drop-in sessions were offered. There were 6 participants in both of the drop-in sessions that were offered as part of the Summer Camp for UTM Instructors and UTM's Ready, Set, Teach Day. Typically, only two or three instructors participated in the beginning of term drop-in sessions.

C4: Teaching & Learning Cafés

During the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms, the RGASC Educational Developers offered monthly Teaching & Learning Cafés that were intended to provide an informal space for instructors to reflect on how the term has been going, ask any questions that may have come up, and connect with colleagues. In the Fall 2021 term, a morning and evening option were offered. The evening option was intended to make the offering more accessible to sessional instructors. We had very low attendance. In the Fall 2021 term we only had 4 instructors attend a Teaching & Learning Café. In the Winter 2022 term we only had one instructor attend. Instructors mention the desire to stay connected with their peers and to learn from each other, but in a rapidly changing pandemic environment it is more difficult to provide these spaces because the most accessible way to offer this kind of programming shifts from term to term. More outreach needs to be done with instructors, including sessional instructors, to determine the most convenient and accessible type of synchronous connection space.

C5: Pedagogical Reading Groups

Through the TLC, the RGASC Educational Developers facilitated six pedagogical reading groups: two in Summer 2021, two in Fall 2021, and two in Winter 2022. The groups met biweekly with a set chapter or selection to discuss. Participants were encouraged to share how the readings intersected with their pedagogical practice or how the readings suggested strategies that they would implement in their courses.

This year's reading groups focused on the following books:

- *Ungrading: Why Rating Students Undermines Learning (and What to Do Instead)* edited by Susan D. Blum
- *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* by Sara Ahmed
- *Equity-centered Trauma-informed Education* by Alex Shervin Venet
- *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories behind Effective College Teaching* by Joshua R. Eyster
- *Generous Thinking: A Radical Approach to Saving the University* by Kathleen Fitzpatrick
- *Radical Hope: A Teaching Manifesto* by Kevin M. Gannon

A total of 28 instructors of the UTM teaching and learning community participated in the pedagogical reading groups, with 9 instructors participating in two reading groups and two instructors participating in three reading groups over the three terms. There were 16 instructors who participated during the Summer 2021 term, 11 in Fall 2021, and 8 in Winter 2022. Participants included 17 Assistant Professors, Teaching Stream, 5 Associate Professors, 3 Assistant Professors, two Sessional Instructors, and two staff members. The following departments were represented in the reading groups: Anthropology; Biology; English & Drama; Geography, Geomatics & Environment; Historical Studies; Institute of Communication, Culture, Information and Technology (ICCIT); Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy (ISUP); Language Studies; Mathematical & Computational Sciences; Management; Political Science; Sociology; and Visual Studies.

Feedback regarding the pedagogical reading groups continues to be overwhelmingly positive with many instructors commenting on the way the reading groups help build meaningful connections with other UTM instructors that persist even after the reading groups end. The following comment

from one of the pedagogical reading group feedback forms captures two of the key sentiments shared by instructors who participated in this year's reading groups:

"I appreciated having the space to reflect while reading and sharing ideas with the members of the reading group. I also really valued having this community gathering online every week as this entire year I felt a little disconnected from UTM and the rest of the world so this helped me re-connect with the people I work with!"

We look forward to continuing to provide this meaningful space for the UTM teaching and learning community during the 2022/23 academic year.

In collaboration with The UTM Indigenous Centre, the RGASC Educational Developers co-facilitated a reading group focused on discussing decolonization and indigenization in the context of post-secondary classrooms, course design, and pedagogy. There were six faculty participants and five staff participants including the four staff members who facilitated the reading group. The group met biweekly beginning in November 2021 until March 2022. Our discussions focused on five articles and book chapters:

- Gaudry, A., & Lorenz, D. (2018). Indigenization as inclusion, reconciliation, and decolonization: Navigating the different visions for indigenizing the Canadian academy. *AlterNative: an International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 14(3), 218–227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180118785382>
- Tuck, E. & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 1-40.
- Walter, M. & Andersen, C. (2013). *Indigenous Statistics: A Quantitative Research Methodology* (pp. 58-81). Left Coast Press.
- Hanson, A. J. (2020). *Literatures, Communities, And Learning*. (pp. 89-100). Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Justice, D.H. (2018). *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*. (pp. 56-93). Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

One of the outcomes of this reading group was a workshop by Danielle Lorenz at the end of March focusing on decolonization in Canadian post-secondary education. This group is an example of building community within UTM to support equity initiatives. This could be elaborated to other areas in collaboration with the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Office to support anti-racist pedagogies, gender-inclusive pedagogies, and accessible pedagogy.

Over the year our reading group has transformed into a community of practice. We plan to organize a couple of one-off events during the summer, but plan to resume regular meetings again in the fall.

C6: TLC Communications

The TLC newsletter is published once a term and allows faculty, instructors, and sessional lecturers to showcase their teaching and learning innovations, award and grant successes, and SoTL projects. The TLC Newsletter is sent via MailChimp. The number of subscribers has grown very slightly this year. A gap has been noted in the subscriptions to the TLC newsletter and the TLC listserv. To

address this gap, we will create one form that allows community members to subscribe to both the TLC listserv and newsletter. The form will be available on the TLC website.

After strong interest in contributing to the Summer 2021 newsletter, we noted that the newsletter submissions decreased during the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 terms. This is consistent with patterns noted in TLC participation. These have been an incredibly challenging two years and our community is exhausted. For many instructors, the number of publications, outreach opportunities, and conference presentations have decreased, which also results in there being less news to share. Analytics from MailChimp highlight that 22% of subscribers are not very engaged and rarely click through the newsletter. Overall analytics suggested that newsletter subscribers were less engaged with the newsletter content than they have been in previous years.

The TLC listserv is another key communication tool used by the TLC. Weekly updates regarding upcoming offerings are sent out via the listserv. Other opportunities including grants and fellowships are also shared. The listserv has added 27 new subscribers since May 2021. An announcement of events from the UTM Teach Anywhere Quercus site is also sent each Monday morning. There are 910 instructors enrolled in the Teach Anywhere site which is an increase of 10% from last year (76 additional instructors).

The TLC Twitter now has 368 followers, which is a 12% increase (38 followers) compared to April of last year. The TLC Twitter is used to share information about upcoming TLC events as well as resources and links of pedagogical importance. It serves as yet another format for instructors to engage with the TLC and thus modeling UDL guidelines for multimodality and authentic connection opportunities.

C7: Future Priorities for Faculty Support

The RGASC Educational Developer team will grow this summer with the addition of four new Educational Developers roles. As of June 2022, the team will consist of a Senior Educational Developer, an Educational Developer focused on Universal Design for Learning (UDL), an Educational Developer focused on instructional practices and student engagement, an Educational Developer focused on indigenous pedagogies and decolonization, an Educational Developer focused on Scholarship of Teaching & Learning and Assessment, and an Educational Developer focused on anti-racist pedagogies. This increased capacity will allow us to advertise our services more broadly and expand our reach to better support all UTM instructors.

In an attempt to model Universal Design for Learning, we will work toward offering educational development supports in different ways. We have begun adding a question about preferences between in-person and online options to our registration forms for reading groups and TLC sessions. Thus far, there continues to be very strong demand for online sessions. Over the 2022/23 academic year we will monitor demand for in-person and online options for instructor supports and make adjustments to adapt to those needs. We do expect that online instructor supports will remain a priority. We plan to address the varied needs of instructors and model Universal Design for Learning by expanding our offerings such that we offer resources using a variety of delivery modes.

References:

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Part D: Critical Reflection and Assessment

D1: Critical Reflection

In the fall of 2021, the RGASC initiated a critically reflective exercise consisting of two parts: (1) an environmental scan of academic skill centres, writing centres, and centres for teaching and learning across Canada; and (2) seventy-two semi-structured discussions with students, faculty, writing instructors, staff, alumni, and advisory board members. The semi-structured discussions focused on five core questions:

1. What does the RGASC do well?
2. What can the RGASC do better?
3. What structural support is needed for the RGASC?
4. What can be done to make individuals feel valued and supported?
5. In 5 years, what would you want the RGASC to be doing?

Responses to the critical reflection underwent a thematic analysis to identify common themes and sub-themes. Fourteen core themes were identified and are summarized below. We have provided sample comments regarding strengths and improvements aligned with these themes.

Table 52. Critical Reflection Summary

Theme	What the RGASC does well	What the RGASC can do better	Quotes
1. ISUP & RGASC Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We attract outstanding faculty and staff. • Those who know us know what we do and who we are. • We have an excellent reputation externally in terms of writing support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RGASC is not a writing centre, yet many students/faculty think this is our main focus. • Some faculty voiced concerns with the metaphor of RGASC as the “storefront” of ISUP • We can leverage our dual mandate (student AND faculty support) better. • ISUP is not a centre for teaching and learning, but there seems to be some confusion about this with faculty. 	<p>“ISUP & RGASC are so special and unique and have tremendous potential...will be a leader globally...but we need to do a better job of communicating to others what makes us special.”</p>
2. Communication & Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students that are connected know what we do. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don’t reach all students, and many students aren’t aware 	<p>“Most of the RGASC programming I attended as a student</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some faculty are extremely engaged with RGASC programming, especially the TLC. • We communicate with some campus partners really well. • We do just-in-time communication to students well. 	<p>of RGASC support even in third and fourth year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many faculty think the RGASC is solely for student support. • Some campus partners also aren't aware of RGASC supports. • With the growth of ISUP, we need deliberate attention to internal communication. 	<p>– I found out about it from my friends.”</p>
3. RGASC Programming: Student Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The FSG and PMLC programs are outstanding and are leaders in Canada. • The PASS program is also outstanding and is a leader in Canada. • The writing support that is embedded in courses (like WDI and WOH) is incredibly impactful. • Students report that the one-on-one appointments are very well done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study skills support • Numeracy support • Self-regulated learning support • More drop-in appointments and workshops, and more variety of drop-in topics 	<p>“My experience participating in FSGs...also as an FSG leader...made my undergrad more meaningful.”</p>
4. RGASC Programming: Faculty Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty report incredible engagement and impact with the TLC. • Faculty report on the transformational work of the educational developers. • The pedagogical reading groups are incredibly popular with faculty. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty are overwhelmed – how do we consider this when designing support? • Many faculty commented on needing support in meaningfully decolonizing their courses and incorporating anti-racist pedagogy. (Note – the recent expansion of the ED group 	<p>“I feel like educational developers are the heart and soul of transformative pedagogy at UTM. I hope they know how much we value them.”</p>

		should assist with this focus and capacity)	
5. Equity, Diversity & Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent ISUP-wide discussions on EDI were valued (but folks indicated the conversation needs to continue) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is concern that the RGASC has not acted towards the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. There is concern that approaches to EDI within academic systems tend to be of a “checklist” format, rather than foundational. 	<p>“If we expect faculty to make EDI foundational in their course designs and syllabi, then we need to make it foundational in our student and faculty support and programming.”</p>
6. Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PMLC and SASI programs are incredibly valued by students. Student leaders reported that these programs were utterly transformational to their undergraduate experience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty have requested more guidance on how to make accessibility foundational to their course designs. We need to ensure all ISUP and RGASC Communications abides by accessibility standards. We need to model the importance of not using ablest language. 	<p>“As a student with accessibility needs, I really wish that faculty would realize that accessibility accommodations benefit more than just me.”</p>
7. Knowledge Sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty and staff expressed appreciation and thanks for the new ISUP and RGASC Sharepoint sites. Annual report is important to have – it is clear and helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization and access of data Organization and access of reports More people need to have access to institutional knowledge. 	<p>“In my job - to do it well - I need access to information.”</p>
8. RGASC Front Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front office (pre-COVID) was a welcoming space So helpful for immediate (online) appointment support for instructors and students alike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We need more staff to cover the front office & involve students in our front office more Students should know right away how we can help them - we 	<p>“As a student, I can’t even begin to explain how safe I felt when I would walk into the front office - I felt like I was really welcomed”</p>

		<p>need more handouts and more ways for students to get front office info</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to remember that the front office is both ONLINE and IN-PERSON - need to have plans for improving both aspects. 	<p>“Our front office should be a welcoming environment – it used to be, but I’m worried it has lost this since COVID.”</p>
9. Relational at our core	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do relationships really well – we need to remember that so much of our work depends on relationships. • We acknowledge and value these relationships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to protect time for relationship building and nurturing. • We need to have a deliberate plan for developing relationships. 	<p>“So much of our work depends on relationships - be it with students, faculty, staff, or others. This is what makes our work impactful and meaningful.”</p>
10. Administrative Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new administrative roles and duties related to ISUP will really help with workload. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still a lot of administrative work being done by folks who have specializations in other areas. This takes time away from the work they should be doing. 	<p>“I do a lot of admin-type work, and I don’t have training for that. It isn’t what my job should be.”</p>
11. Data Analysis & Decision Making Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do a really good job of collecting data from our students (e.g., after every one-on-one appointment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to do a better job of using the data we collect to inform our decisions • Can we hire a data analysis person? • We need to do an analysis of which students we are reaching and which students we aren’t reaching. 	<p>“I wish I could have more training on how to make data-informed decisions.”</p> <p>“Can the advisory board contribute to the annual report – for example, asking for specific types of data analysis?”</p>
12. Training & Evidence-Informed Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The writing instructors reports they really valued the training provided at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we scaffold our approach to training and offer more advanced types of 	<p>“We are an academic unit - and need to model that we use</p>

	the start of term. (And expressed a request for more training sessions.)	training to staff and faculty?	evidence-informed approaches/practices”
13. Faculty & Staff Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RGASC annual report is a good overview. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need a deliberate mentorship plan • We need a clear plan for onboarding • We need a clear plan for routine check-ins 	“The annual report was how I was introduced to the RGASC. I would have liked to have another level of onboarding.”
14. Valuing our Team Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We celebrate each other’s successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need a deliberate plan for inclusion and accessibility 	“We need to value each other and our relationships – there is huge potential now to rethink how we do this post-COVID”

Examples of participant wishlists in 5 years

- “I’d like us to have a dedicated communications and marketing person.”
- “All first year students have to know where we are.”
- “All be in the same space (...actually have a space)”
- “Better syllabus statement about the RGASC - more focused with examples”
- “Fully fleshed out website with LOTS of resources for students and faculty.”

D2: Assessment Working Group

In Summer 2021, the ISUP Assessment Working Group was launched. This is an ISUP-wide group, however a core focus is assessment of RGASC programming and impact. This group performed an environmental scan of assessment resources and processes, and initiated the construction of draft assessment plans, for both curricular and co-curricular initiatives. This year, the group also revised the RGASC surveys that are used for program assessment. Moving forward, this group will review database management and program evaluation approaches, and proceed with performing detailed assessments of outcomes and impact of RGASC programming.

Appendix A: RGASC Advisory Committee Membership (2021/2022)

Undergraduate Student	Esther Baffour
UTMSU Representative	Suraqa Noor
Graduate Student	Madeleine Oman
Teaching Assistant	Forrest Hisey
Faculty Member, Humanities	Rosa Hong
Faculty Member, Social Sciences	Nathan Innocente
Faculty Member, Management	Rafael Chiuzy
Faculty Member, Sciences	Marc Laflamme
Centre for Student Engagement	Jackie Goodman
Office of the Registrar	Svitlana Frunchak
Academic Advisor, ISUP	Laura Cesario
Academic Advisor, Mathematical and Computational Sciences	Laura Ferlito
UTM Library	Rob Makinson
RGASC Staff	Kerrie Martin
RGASC Coordinator	Cliona Kelly
RGASC Director	Fiona Rawle
Additional Observers	Ruth Childs, Director of ISUP Aimy Lieu, Assistant Director of ISUP Jordana Garbati, Incoming RGASC Director

Appendix B: RGASC Advisory Board Guiding Questions

- 1. Student Communication:** Through the recent RGASC critical reflection, students reported that there seem to be large sectors of students that know about the RGASC and large sectors that don't. Students reported that having the RGASC on the third floor of the MN building may be contributing to this. What is your advice on how the RGASC can effectively communicate its offerings to students? Should we be expanding out just-in-time communication strategy? (We have noted that just-in-time communication is crucial to student engagement. This is also well established in the literature.)
- 2. Faculty Communication:** The recent RGASC critically reflective exercise, along with surveys conducted over the past 5-years, shows that there are some persistent misunderstandings by faculty about the scope of the support they can get at the RGASC. (RGASC has a dual mandate for both faculty and student support, yet many faculty have the impression that the main focus is on students.) What is your advice on how the RGASC can improve its communication strategy to faculty?
- 3. RGASC Identity:** With the establishment of the Institute of the Study of University Pedagogy (ISUP) there have been some concerns that the RGASC identity will be diminished. How should we frame the RGASC identity to students, staff, and faculty?
- 4. Front Office Processes & Student Outreach Ambassadors:** In the recent RGASC critical reflection, students were very clear about wanting a community of support and the importance of them feeling welcomed into a vibrant RGASC space. In some other centres, there are teams of "Student Outreach Ambassadors" that go into classes to tell their peers about offerings, and have a presence in the front office space. Is this something that the RGASC should be pursuing? What else can we do to ensure all students feel welcomed into a vibrant space?
- 5. Types of Appointments Offered:** For booked appointments, the RGASC currently offers In-person, Online Synchronous, and Online Asynchronous. Drop-in appointments also exist, but student feedback from the RGASC critical reflection shows that barriers exist to accessing these appointments, including that students do not feel they are truly open drop-in sessions. (For example, students reported that having drop-ins at the same time every week would be more helpful than fluctuating times. Students also reported that needing to register for drop-ins made them feel like they weren't truly drop-ins. Additionally, the drop-in appointments have very low student attendance, but when we speak to students they say they want more drop-in appointments.) Where should the RGASC be placing its emphasis in terms of appointment offerings? In addition, what types of drop-in appointments should we be offering? (Other centres offer drop-in appointments on note-taking, preparing for a writing assignment, time-management, and test taking approaches, for example).

6. **Accessibility, Access, Equity and Inclusion:** This question is related to all other questions asked on this list – our approach to accessibility, access, equity and inclusion needs to be foundational. With that in mind, what are your thoughts on what the RGASC should be doing to make these four pillars foundational? Please note that accessibility and access are not the same thing, and we need to be careful not to conflate them. Accessibility refers to things including pedagogical strategies that support disabled learners. Access means removing barriers, such as by having different kinds of ways that students can "access" our services.
- What disability supports for learners and faculty should we emphasize through our RGASC work?
 - What access options should we have available for students?
 - Are there currently gaps in our support of equity-deserving groups of learners and instructors? How can we identify and rectify these gaps?
7. **Assessment:** The Assessment Working Group was established in the summer of 2021 to review and refine how we evaluate the RGASC's programming. This working group is actively considering what the priority areas for assessment should be in the coming years. What questions do you have that the assessment working group could help to answer?
8. **Structural Support (staff and programming):** The recent RGASC environmental scan of centres across Canada showed that some of our work is truly groundbreaking, showing incredible leadership and modelling to other centres. The environmental scan also showed that we are critically underfunded in some areas. (One example of critical underfunding that has been recently corrected is the number of educational developers (EDs) employed at the RGASC. Our environmental scan showed that we had about 1/3 the number of EDs compared to other centres. Thanks to Office of the Dean support, we were able to hire four additional EDs over the past 6 months. Some of our supplemental instruction programming, like FSGs, also appears to be underfunded on a per-student basis compared to other programs.) In your opinion, are there other types of structural support we should be advocating for?