

RGASC Annual Report 2022-2023

Prepared by RGASC Staff and Faculty

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UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO
MISSISSAUGA

ROBERT GILLESPIE
ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE

Executive Summary

As in previous years, 2022-2023 was a busy year for the Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC). The RGASC saw changes in leadership, staffing, and program design. In terms of leadership, Dr. Jordana Garbati, Assistant Professor, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy began a 3-year term as Director in July 2021. Ongoing mentoring continued for four new Educational Developers who joined the RGASC in early 2022. New staff were also hired in the areas of outreach and engagement, administration and communication, and program administration in late 2022. The Centre also hired and mentored a new team of work study students.

Our core work continues to be in the areas of writing, numeracy and math, and study skills for students and pedagogical support for faculty. Our team of staff and faculty remained flexible in offering programming both online and in person for students and faculty across campus. While attendance, in general, varied from years past, overall attendance in all programs offered remained strong. Some notable numbers include:

- 685 unique students in writing appointments
- 90 unique students in numeracy and math appointments
- 24 students attended the Caribbean and Black Writing Collective
- 316 students passed the Professional English Language Skills (PELS) program
- 2250 students attended Facilitated Study Group sessions
- 63 in-class writing workshops
- 93 unique students participated in the Program for Accessing Research Training (PART)
- 150 graduate students attended two Graduate Professional Development Conferences
- 250 individual faculty and instructor consultations
- 8 faculty and instructor workshops
- 7 pedagogical reading groups for faculty and staff

Plans for 2023-2024 include increasing outreach opportunities to first-year students (e.g., through Head Start), offering desired programming for graduate students (e.g., online resources, in person workshops), nurturing opportunities with campus partners (e.g., Centre for Student Engagement and the Support, Engage, and Experience (SEE) UTM Program). The RGASC team is also working toward a 3-year strategic plan, which was initiated in Spring 2023.

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Land Acknowledgement

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.

About the RGASC

The Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre (RGASC) is UTM's hub for learning and teaching. We support the development of academic skills for student success and the development of instructors' pedagogical practices.

Organizational Structure

In 2022-2023, the RGASC employed 12 permanent staff (listed in alphabetical order by last name):

- Dianne Ashbourne (she/her) - Senior Educational Developer & Team Lead
- Corrine Bent-Womack (she/her) - Educational Developer, Anti-Racist Pedagogies
- Jessica Bailey (she/her) - Graduate Student Support Strategist
- Amanda Brijmohan (she/her) - Educational Developer, Assessment and Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
- Ann Gagné (she/her) - Educational Developer, Universal Design for Learning & Accessible Pedagogies
- Sam Howden (they/them) - Coordinator - Indigenous Pedagogies
- Rob Huang (he/him) - Educational Developer, Instructional Practices and Student Engagement
- Kerrie Martin (he/him) - Learning Strategist and Program Manager
- Linda Duong (she/her) - Learning Strategist
- Louis Nguyen (he/him) - Program Administrator
- Laura Smith (she/her) - Outreach and Engagement Coordinator
- Olivia Tenn (she/her) - Administrative and Communications Assistant

RGASC was also supported by ISUP Administrative Staff:

- Aimy Lieu (she/her) - Associate Director, Institute for the Study of University Pedagogy
- Alex Zaranek (he/him) - Business Officer

RGASC employed 10 part-time Writing, Numeracy and Math, and Study Skills Instructors:

- Tara AlHadithy (she/her) - Writing
- Joel Benabu (he/him) - Writing
- Michael Cournoyea (he/him) - Writing
- Susan Hopkirk (she/her) - Writing & Study Skills
- Patti Luedecke (she/her) - Writing
- Elaine Morton (she/her) - Writing
- Paul Raymont (he/him) - Writing

- Carlos Restrepo Cunha (he/him) - Math and Numeracy
- Penny Saeedi (she/her) - Writing
- Jack Zapotochny (he/him) - Writing

Notable Changes in 2022-2023

Notable changes in 2022-2023 to the RGASC leadership, structure, and programming were as follows:

- Dr. Jordana Garbati began a 3-year term as Director, RGASC on July 1, 2022.
- We hired seven work study students to work in the RGASC's front office. Their primary responsibilities included welcoming students, staff, and faculty into the RGASC; explaining our online appointment booking system (WOnline) to students; helping to coordinate and organize events; and maintain front office operations.
- We implemented a new organizational structure at the RGASC, which included the hiring and onboarding of several staff. These positions and main responsibilities are as follows:
 - Outreach and Engagement Coordinator – work with the Director to maintain appointment data and assess usage trends; work with the Administrative and Communications Assistant to oversee work study students and website; and work with RGASC staff to promote and assess programming.
 - Program Administrator – work with the Learning Strategists and Educational Developers to maintain records, organize events, and assist with programming initiatives.
 - Administrative and Communications Assistant – maintain and update RGASC website, organize RGASC events, discuss programming with work study students, and oversee front office operations.
- We transitioned back to on-campus programming and events. These included writing and numeracy appointments, weekly writing drop-in hours, educational development workshops, and programming within the learning strategies portfolio (e.g., PASS sessions).
- We created an inviting and inclusive atmosphere in the RGASC with the addition of artwork from the Blackwood Gallery; an investment in artwork by Christi Belcourt, a well-known Indigenous artist; inclusion of plants, sensory items, and swag in RGASC public spaces.

Future Directions

In 2023-2024, we aim to:

- develop a 3-year strategic plan.
- improve and update technology in our learning environments to increase accessibility.
- create a new visual identity and develop outreach initiatives.
- review and/or redevelop programming offerings to better suit students' and instructors' needs (i.e., WDI, PART, Caribbean and Black Writing Collective).

Undergraduate Support

Writing

Appointments

Overview

In 2022-2023, we offered 2180 hours of one-on-one writing support in the form of drop-in hours (in person) and booked appointments (in person, online synchronous, and online asynchronous).

In Fall 2022 and Winter 2023, online synchronous appointments (in which instructor and student meet over Zoom) accounted for roughly 60% of writing appointments. About 20% of appointments were in-person, and 20% were online asynchronous (in which students upload their drafts for feedback). Asynchronous appointments were offered in the second half of each semester. Finally, Writing Studio drop-in hours were offered each week at noon on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays in the RGASC Active Learning classroom.

Summer 2022

We offered 260 hours of writing appointments. Unfortunately, utilization and client data were not available for analysis and has not been included in this report.

Fall 2022

Demand for one-on-one writing support was strong in the Fall 2022 semester. We offered 630 hours of one-on-one writing appointments of which 79% (499 hours) were used. These appointments were made by 318 unique students, of which a healthy minority (42%) were repeat visitors. The overwhelming majority (72%) of these students were first years. This robust demand was reflected in an active but largely ineffective waiting list; only 6.8% of waiting list entries were converted into an appointment.

The demand for appointments made it impossible to draw conclusions about which delivery formats students preferred. Similarly, the delivery formats of cancelled and missed appointments aligned with the proportion of total appointments offered in each format.

In 2022-23, we offered drop-in Writing Studio hours, three times a week in the fall and winter semesters. These drop-ins had variable demand in the fall semester. 61 students attended 35 drop-in hours, with an average of 2.3 students per hour. The second half of the semester saw a notable increase in attendance, peaking at 8 students in one drop-in hour in mid-November.

Winter 2023

In Winter 2023, we doubled the number of available one-on-one writing appointments. In this case, supply outweighed demand: only 56% or 688 of the 1224 available hours offered were used. Appointments were made by 357 unique students. The majority (58%) visited only once.

While this overall utilization rate is disappointing, it does represent an increase in students accessing the centre compared to Fall 2022 and offers some potential insights into student preferences when given extensive choice. Anecdotal evidence shows that on-campus attendance in classes and other events was also low in Winter 2023.

Online asynchronous appointments maintained an 82% utilization rate, in comparison to in-person (54%) and online synchronous (51%) rates. This indicates that UTM students enjoy asynchronous options for writing support. The timing of these appointments (after Reading Week) when written assignments come due in many courses, is likely a factor in their popularity.

The increased supply meant that the waiting list was less active in Winter, with only 171 entries. 16% were converted into an appointment suggesting scheduling conflicts were an issue for wait list students.

As with appointments, Writing Studio drop-in attendance was also down in Winter 2023 compared to that of Fall 2022. In Winter, 27 students visited an average of 1.3 times. Fourteen drop-in sessions went completely unattended.

Course Support

General

The RGASC offers additional writing support embedded in a wide range of courses. Because the support is customized for each course, it can take a variety of forms, including:

1. Presentations/workshops: These can cover a wide variety of writing topics and genres (e.g., lab reports, thesis statements, argumentative writing, first-year writing, research essay introductions, research proposals);
2. Writing Office Hours: These are asynchronous, online appointments scheduled in alignment with the course. These are similar to the RGASC's asynchronous appointment where students submit their writing and receive feedback;
3. Benchmarking and TA training/harmonization: Sessions specifically designed to help TAs with providing feedback about writing;
4. Writing Retreats: Course-specific sessions are scheduled (in person or virtually) for students to work on and get support with their writing assignments.

In 2022-2023, we offered 63 (73 in 2021-2022) in-class or in-tutorial presentations and workshops. We saw 438 (486 in 2021-2022) students in Writing Office Hours. We held 18 (7 in 2021-2022) writing retreats.

Writing Development Initiative

The RGASC also offers the Writing Development Initiative (WDI), which provides resources, support, and financial assistance, for innovative course- and discipline-specific projects to enhance students' use of writing in the target course.

In 2022-23, close to 40 courses had WDI-supported projects, involving roughly one-third of UTM's overall student population. All of these projects were provided funding for extra TA hours, and many projects benefit from planning support by RGASC and ISUP faculty.

In 2022-2023, we offered 11 (26 in 2021-2022) in-class or in-tutorial presentations and workshops. We saw 237 (509 in 2021-2022) students in Writing Office Hours. We held 16 (15 in 2021-2022) benchmarking sessions.

Caribbean and Black Writing Collective

In 2022-2023, ISUP faculty and RGASC staff collaborated to design and lead the Caribbean and Black Writing Collective. In 2.5 hour sessions, students who identify as Caribbean (Black, Indo Caribbean, Chinese-Caribbean, etc.) and/or Black (African, Caribbean, Canadian, etc.) are provided with an opportunity to work and study in a collaborative environment with ISUP faculty and their peers. Check-ins, networking, reflective discussions, writing/reading/numeracy support are all enhance the session experience.

Between January and March 2023, five sessions of 2.5 hours each were held. Ten unique students participated in the group, many attending three or four times. Total attendance was 24.

Math and Numeracy

Appointments

The RGASC offered in-person and online synchronous Math and Numeracy appointments. In the fall, 146 hours of appointments were offered, while in winter, students had access to 152 hours. Math and Numeracy appointments were predominantly online synchronous (66% in Fall and 75% in Winter).

Demand for Math and Numeracy appointments was modest with a consistent utilization rate of 65% across both the Fall and Winter semesters. 51 unique students accessed Math and Numeracy appointments in the fall semester, while 34 attended appointments

in the Winter. While most students attended only one appointment, there was a trend toward students making Math and Numeracy appointments a regular feature of their weekly schedule. Some students booked the same time slot each week and requested permission to book additional appointments (beyond the one appointment per week rule) at the end of the semester as the demands of their courses increased.

Foundational Math Skills for University

Foundational Math Skills for University (FMSU) is our six-week online Math and Numeracy program for incoming first year students. Offered during the summer semester, the program gives students a refresher of high school math through two hour online synchronous sessions, practice problems, and quizzes. The program introduces students to university Mathematics, with on campus visits to Math lectures, and introductions to communication and learning management systems commonly used in UTM Mathematics courses.

In July 2022, incoming students were invited to register for one of 500 spots in the FMSU program. The cap was reached quickly with 500 students added to the FMSU Quercus Shell. In all, 254 students participated in the program, by attending online sessions and completing the weekly quizzes.

Learning Strategies

Overview

The learning strategy portfolio focuses on providing study skills support through peer-led programming. Our primary programs are the Facilitated Study Groups (FSGs), Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS), and Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLCs). In addition, we have offered study skills workshops for the RGASC's Head Start program, and at the request of departments and academic societies. Learning Strategists also provide study skills support to wider UTM initiatives and programs including Exam Jam, the Summer Academic Skills Institute, and the Support Engage Experience (SEE) UTM program.

In 2022-2023, we began offering dedicated one-on-one study skills appointments with a part-time Study Skills Instructor. We offered 66 half hour appointments in each of the fall and winter semesters. Demand for these appointments was low, with 23 unique students booking 24 appointments in the Fall semester (36% utilization rate) and 10 unique students booking 15 appointments in the Winter semester (22.7% utilization rate).

Our full-time Learning Strategists led six presentations at the International Supplemental Instruction conference in June 2022, and two team members received the Veteran Supervisor and Veteran Mentor awards.

Facilitated Study Groups (FSGs)

FSGs are rooted in the Supplemental Instruction (SI) model developed by the University of Missouri at Kansas City. SI is a non-remedial approach to learning enrichment that uses peer-assisted study groups to integrate essential academic skills with course-related material. FSGs are only offered in support of courses in which there is active collaboration between the course instructor and the RGASC. The sessions are led 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 majority of FSGs returned to in-person delivery in Fall 2022 after primarily being delivered online from March 2020 to May 2022 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 shows the overall attendances, number of courses, and number of FSG sessions from Fall 2021 to Winter 2023.

Table 1

FSG Attendance Data

	FALL 2021	FALL 2022	WINTER 2022	WINTER 2023	2021-22 TOTAL	2022-23 TOTAL
STUDENT ATTENDANCES	1590	1042	904	1208	2494	2250
NUMBER OF COURSES	23	26	30	31	53	57
NUMBER OF FSG SESSIONS	303	354	247	485	550	839

While overall attendance to FSGs decreased in 2022-2023 from 2021-2022, the number of courses and sessions increased, which suggests the focus in 2023-2024 needs to be on optimizing the times of the sessions and continuing to increase awareness of FSGs to increase session attendance.

Almost all of the student attendees to FSGs in 2022-2023 would have never experienced an in-person FSG before, and this may have impacted the understanding of what in-person FSGs are. As more focus was put on communication and advertising, attendance increased from Winter 2023 and from Fall 2022.

FSG and SEE UTM

In summer 2022, the FSG program was invited to support the pilot launch of Support, Engage, Experience University of Toronto (SEE UTM). SEE UTM aims to make post-secondary education more accessible to students who come from communities historically underrepresented at UTM. FSG leaders led weekly FSG sessions for Black high school students from the Peel District School Board throughout the Fall Term with 20+ attendees per week.

Collaboration with EDS325

The RGASC continued to collaborate with Language Studies to run EDS325: Supplemental Instruction in Higher Education, a credit-bearing course that introduces students to the theory and practice of Supplemental Instruction in higher education. EDS325 incorporates the RGASC's FSG program as a mandatory internship for every student in the course. In 2022-2023, we worked with a total of 71 EDS325 students (66 students in 2021-2022).

Promoting Academic Skills for Success (PASS)

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 (PASS Term 1) followed by supplemental support and mentoring in the subsequent term (PASS Term 2).

In Fall 2022, the PASS program returned to in-person delivery. We increased the number of hours from 12 to 18 per semester.

We reorganized program content to increase presentation time (from 35 minutes to 60 minutes) for staff from the Career Centre, Health and Counselling Centre, and Office of the Registrar. In addition, we created a panel, where former PASS students, who now work as PASS Program Assistants, shared their journeys from at-risk status to good standing and graduation.

There was a decrease in annual program retention rate from 69% in 2021-22 to 65% in 2022-23, but this was not totally unexpected as we implemented stricter guidelines for program completion in 2022-2023.

In 2022-23, total attendance for PASS Term 1 increased by 19% from 113 to 134 students. Table 2 shows the number of students who started and completed in a given semester, as well as the retention rate of students beginning the PASS Term 1 program from Summer 2021 to Winter 2023.

Table 2

Participation Rates in PASS Term 1 in 2022-2023

SESSION	STARTED	COMPLETED	RETENTION RATE OF STARTERS (%)
SUMMER 2021	45	27	60
FALL 2021	50	34	68
WINTER 2022	18	14	78
SUMMER 2022	58	36	62
FALL 2022	46	33	72
WINTER 2023	30	18	60
TOTALS	880	637	72

Table 3 shows the number of students who started and completed in a given semester, as well as the retention rate of students beginning the PASS Term 2 program from Summer 2021 to Winter 2023. In 2022-23, total attendance for PASS Term 2 decreased by 13% from 36 to 41, but retention increased from 49% to 50%.

Table 3

Participation Rates in PASS Term 2 in 2022-2023

SESSION	STARTED	COMPLETED	RETENTION RATE OF STARTERS (%)
SUMMER 2021	13	9	69%
FALL 2021	12	4	33%
WINTER 2022	16	7	44%
SUMMER 2022	12	5	42%
FALL 2022	9	5	56%

WINTER 2023	15	8	53%
TOTALS	78	39	50%

In Winter 2023, our PASS staff launched a collaborative project with the Office of the Registrar and Divisional Research to refine the process for collecting student data, reporting on student progress, and aligning PASS data with Office of the Registrar student records. Phase 1 of the project will be completed in May 2023, with phase 2 commencing shortly thereafter. Phase 2 will focus on integrating PASS data with student demographic data from the Office of the Registrar to better understand how PASS impacts different segments of our at-risk student population.

While the PASS program previously used a pre-PASS and post-PASS survey, we developed a new assessment to ask questions that are better suited to the challenges faced by at-risk students. In Winter 2023, the new assessment was given to students using RedCAP, with the aim of generating attitudinal data on the impact of PASS. In the future it is expected that the assessment will be used to generate informative aggregate data on the impact of PASS, while also being used to help individual students highlight areas of progress and areas for improvement.

Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLC)

The Peer Mentor Learning Communities (PMLC) program is a joint initiative with Accessibility Services and to offer of a series of peer facilitated study skills sessions and Game Cafés to help build a sense of community amongst Accessibility students.

RGASC Program Assistants provide facilitation and study skills training for Accessibility Services peer mentors, who lead study skills sessions for Accessibility students. The RGASC Program Assistants also provide logistical support to schedule and book these sessions, as well as feedback and evaluation of the peer mentors' facilitation during the sessions.

Both Program Assistants and peer mentors also supported the Summer Academic Skills Institute (SASI) in August 2022. SASI aims to equip incoming students registered with Accessibility Services with the academic skills and strategies to make a successful transition to postsecondary education. Table 4 shows attendance data of SASI and PMLC since the 2020-2021 academic year.

Table 4

SASI and PMLC Attendance

	<i>SASI Attendance</i>	<i>PMLC Sessions</i>	<i>PMLC Attendance</i>
2020-21	21	8	196
2021-22	22	12	178
2022-23	28	Unavailable at this time	Unavailable at this time

Additional Specialty Programs

Head Start Program

Our first-year orientation program, Head Start was offered online over 10 days in August 2022. Sessions ran from 9am until 9pm and offered incoming first year students workshops in foundational academic skills development, orientation to UTM’s academic support services, as well as informal sessions on the university experience with senior students, RGASC staff, and ISUP faculty.

Head Start sessions were well attended, with an average of 40 attendees for each session. Students were particularly engaged with academic skills development sessions, such as “Deep Reading for Deep Learning: Understanding University Texts” with Jonathan Vroom (100 attendees), “Time management Techniques” with Kerrie Martin (75 attendees), and “Test Success Strategies” with Margaret Karass (105 attendees).

Preparations are underway for Head Start 2023. The program will again be offered online to provide accessibility and flexibility for students and facilitators. Sessions will follow a similar model to 2022, with the possibility of an additional in-person engagement event at the RGASC during orientation week.

Game Enhanced Learning

Game-Enhanced Learning (GEL) uses board games to aid learning in and out of the classroom in both academic development and student wellness. Currently, ISUP’s Mitchell Pedicelli and a team of volunteers coordinate our program on a part-time basis. The RGASC’s houses 140 unique games.

Most notably, our academic programming includes our work with PASS where we guide Program Assistants (PAs) on how to play and facilitate games (e.g., Pandemic, Concept) used in the programming of PASS, these games are Pandemic and Concept. We currently do not have capacity to offer course support.

Game Cafés are events designed to use games to encourage students to socialize and de-stress to avoid isolation and burnout. Game Facilitators (volunteers) are available to teach games and encourage students to socialize. Game Cafés run by-weekly five times a semester, averaging 100 students in attendance. An additional Exam Jam Game Café occurred at the end of each term with attendance of between 40 and 60 students. Game Cafés do not run during the summer.

GEL has worked with many student groups on campus such as Erindale Gaming Organization, UTM Chess Club, UTM E-Sports, and UTM Against Dragons. These clubs provide volunteers and assist with advertisements for the Game Cafés. Groups on campus have been invited to use games from our collection and get advice on how to incorporate games into their programming. Some examples include Career Centre, UTM IMACC, and Department of Language Studies.

English Language Learner (ELL) Support

Our Professional English Language Skills (PELS) online workshop series is our main program designed for English Language Learners (ELLs). It is open to all students.

ISUP Faculty with expertise in English as an Additional Language (EAL) instruction continued to offer Professional English Language Skills (PELS) in 2022-2023. In addition to offering supplemental academic English language and writing development in FAH101, RLG101, CCT110, and VCC101, PELS was also offered in WGS102 for the first time to provide targeted "just in time" skill development. A generic offering of PELS for any students not enrolled in the courses above was available to students with the Co-Curricular Record (CCR) Office for notation on their transcript.

In 2022-2023, Critical Language Awareness (CLA) (Shapiro, 2022) examples and explanations in Modules 1-8, was added to PELS. CLA content was also expanded in an additional program, 2.0 PELS for students who successfully completed PELS in a previous semester. The rationale for increasing CLA content is supported by research conducted by PELS instructors, and furthermore, increased CLA and linguistic diversity elements are consistent with the curriculum for ISP010 Basics of Writing in English and ISP100 Writing for University and Beyond in 2023-2024.

Table 5 shows the 2022-2023 enrolment and successful pass of participants in PELS. PELS enrolment and successful pass number have fluctuated slightly since 2019-2020; however, there has been an increase in PELS enrollment and successful pass in 2022-2023. In 2022-23, approximately one-third of students successfully completed PELS.

Table 5

The 2022-2023 Total PELS Enrolment and Successful Pass Data

	Total Enrollment	Successful Pass	Notes
<i>FAH101 Fall 2022</i>	77	28	
<i>RLG101 Fall 2022</i>	8	4	Note: RLG101 students earn one participation mark for each module.
<i>General CCR Fall 2022</i>	27	5	
<i>Fall 2022 Total</i>	112	59	
<i>CCT110 Winter 2023</i>	695	180	PELS 2.0 Successful pass: 17/180
<i>RLG101 Winter 2023</i>	38	23	RLG101 students earn one participation mark for each module. Increased promotion in Winter 2023 resulted in higher enrolment compared to Fall 2022.
<i>VCC101 Winter 2023</i>	64	22	PELS 2.0 Successful/Pass: 10/22
<i>WGS102 Winter 2023</i>	74	28	PELS 2.0 Successful/Pass: 4/28
<i>General CCR Winter 2023</i>	16	4	
<i>Winter 2023 Total</i>	887	257	
2022-2023 Totals	999	316	

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

PELS continues to offer academic English language learning and writing development to first-year students – both EAL and non-EAL students – and assist them in the transition to university expectations. The strengths of the program include a model of delivery that offers asynchronous self-study, formative and corrective assessment

feedback, encouragement to use supports at the RGASC, and course marks that reward students' participation through successful completion of PELS modules.

Meetings with faculty to debrief course offerings of PELS indicate that the online design of PELS supports students without skewing course grades or creating additional labour for faculty and teaching assistants. FAH1010 and VCC101 instructors mentioned that students' writing improved and rewarding students for their participation in PELS was fair and motivating, especially for students who are using English as an additional language. CCT110 faculty commented that the automatic enrolment made PELS easily accessible and reduced student questions about how to participate. Furthermore, in-person class visits by PELS instructors improved student participation, and VCC101 and CCT101 instructors indicated that more class visits and online communication by PELS instructors is welcome in these large lecture courses. WGS102 faculty indicated that PELS worked well as a course requirement (not for extra marks), and the instructor noted that 3% is a fair and well-reasoned weight for students' success in PELS.

Challenges include keeping track of students who completed PELS in a previous semester and making sure they complete 2.0 PELS assessments for course credit in the Winter term. This went smoothly; however, this will become increasingly important as more students complete PELS. Going forward, RLG101 instructors will require students to complete a minimum of 7 modules to earn participation marks instead of allocating one mark for every module completed. Consistency between RLG101 and other courses will benefit students by increasing their exposure to PELS content, assessments, feedback, and RGASC writing support.

Program for Accessing Research Training (PART)

Overview

The Program for Accessing Research Training (PART) is an online research training program designed to prepare UTM undergraduate students for possible participation in research opportunities on campus and provide undergraduate students with the opportunity to acquire foundational skills needed for graduate studies. PART currently includes 16 modules taught by faculty, librarians, staff, and graduate students and hosts 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."

Students are eligible to receive a CCR annotation on their transcript as either a Qualitative Methods or a Quantitative Methods PART participant if they complete a specific combination of modules and a reflective writing exercise.

While various aspects of university life transitioned back to in-person programming in Fall 2022, the success of PART online led to the decision to continue offering PART online for 2022/2023. A PART Quercus shell continued to house information related to the program including the schedule, Zoom meetings links, supporting materials for each module, and a space for assignment submissions.

Attendance Data

The Fall 2022/Winter 2023 Quercus shell hosted 467 students. Table 7 compares PART attendance from 2020-2021 to 2022-2023. The number of students enrolling in the PART Quercus Course has increased, but the number of participants (students to attended sessions) has decreased.

Table 7

PART Attendance Data

Academic Year	Students Enrolled in Quercus Course	Number of Participants (Unique Participants)
2022-2023	467	180 (93)
2021-2022	530	388 (130)
2020-2021	298	400 (103)

For the PART Summer Institute 2023, 93 students self-enrolled to participate in PART. Table 8 compares PART Summer Institute attendance from 2021-2023.

Table 8

PART Attendance Data – Summer

Academic Year	Students Enrolled in Quercus Course	Number of Unique Participants
2023	93	50
2022	257	124
2021	81	50

No students completed all the program requirements to obtain CCR in Fall/Winter 2022-2023 (compared to: Fall/Winter 2021-2022: 7 CCR notations; Fall/Winter 2020-2021: 21 CCR notations). In Summer 2023, 26 students received CCR notations (Summer 2022: 47 students; Summer 2021: 18 students).

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

Student participation continues to be a challenge for PART. Attendance is affected by factors including conflicts with course schedules and ineffective marketing to the UTM community. With the return to in-person learning, students may be facing additional barriers to attend programming (e.g., juggling in-person and online activities without the supported space to participate with online programming). A student's inability to participate in PART modules affects their ability complete enough modules to obtain a CCR annotation on their transcript. Additionally, over the years, module content has changed from facilitator to facilitator and the learning outcomes and content have become obscure. In 2023-2024, the RGASC will launch a new iteration of the PART program. The reimagined PART aims to increase accessibility for undergraduate students to participate in PART modules and more efficiently obtain CCR, involve UTM graduate students by offering TA-ships for facilitating certain modules, and respond to the current needs of the UTM student community with by adding, removing, and revising modules.

Graduate Student Support

Overview

The RGASC supports graduate students by offering programming in the form of conferences, workshops, writing groups, and one-on-one consultations. We also fulfill requests from programs and departments for workshops. Our graduate conferences and workshops continue to be accredited through the School of Graduate Studies' MyGPD program an initiative of the School of Graduate Studies Centre for Graduate Professional Development (CGPD) and designed to help all graduate students prepare for their future by advancing the development of important transferable skills and competencies.

At the RGASC, support for graduate students continues to be informed by feedback from the UTM graduate community. With the shift to more in-person activity on the UTM campus, we have taken this academic year to learn more about graduate students' transition back to campus, and in learning about their experiences, how to address their needs appropriately.

The Graduate Student Support Strategist (GSSS) conducts outreach to the UTM graduate community through various methods, including the Graduate Needs Assessment Survey. This year, the survey was distributed in November 2022. Survey completion was incentivized with the chance to win two \$50 gift cards. A total of 104 graduate students participated from various degrees (i.e., MA/MSc, PhD, Professional Masters), years, and department/programs. The results of the survey indicate that graduate students would like online and hybrid one-off workshops, workshop series, and conferences. Programming topics of interest were mostly related to writing and career exploration.

In addition to distributing the Graduate Needs Assessment Survey, the GSSS reconnected with various UTM stakeholders including the Vice-Dean Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs, graduate students (individually and in groups), faculty, and staff who support graduate students in their departments. In reconnecting with various stakeholders, conversations led to the execution of a focus group, round table, and town hall to learn about graduate programming needs. The findings of those activities were similar to the feedback received in the Graduate Needs Assessment Survey.

Graduate Professional Development Conference

During the Fall 2022 and Winter 2023 UTM Reading Weeks, the RGASC hosts the Graduate Professional Development Conference (GPDC). A total of 88 unique participants participated in the Fall 2022 GPDC (19 unique participants in 2021, 57 in 2020), and a total of 62 unique participants participated in the Winter 2023 GPDC (117

unique participants in 2022, 77 in 2021). Tables 9 and 10 show the Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 (respectively) GPDC session titles, facilitators, and attendance.

Feedback from GPDC attendees indicated the need for a continued online or hybrid GPDC and expressed students' satisfaction about the accessibility of the conference as well as the variety of topics offered. To improve GPDC, participants suggested sessions be more interactive and have in-person components.

Graduate Workshops

We scheduled 12 workshops for graduate students in 2022-2023. Four workshops were cancelled due to low registration. Attendance was relatively low, with an average of 9 attendees per workshop.

Graduate Writing Group

Graduate Writing Groups are informal weekly group writing sessions designed to help graduate students connect to a writing community, stay focused, and make progress in their writing projects. Each writing group meeting is facilitated by an RGASC Writing Specialist, and included group discussions on writing topics, dedicated group writing time, and one-on-one consultations. This year, they were held weekly for three hours on Zoom.

In total, 12 graduate students participated in the Fall Graduate Writing Group and 11 graduate students participated in the Winter Graduate Writing Group. Attendance decreased over the course of a semester. The pattern of diminishing attendance week after week is consistent with the previous two years.

Graduate Appointments

Graduate students can book appointments for one-on-one writing support with RGASC writing instructors. The RGASC conducted 7 appointments with UTM-affiliated graduate students in 2022-2023. Appointments for graduate students included topics related to writing funding/award applications and their dissertation.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

For 2022-2023, graduate programming was hosted online via Zoom, which made programming more accessible to graduate students who would not have been able to attend otherwise. Additionally, the return to campus provided the GSSS with an opportunity to reconnect with the UTM graduate community including graduate students, faculty, staff, and librarians.

Graduate students' engagement with the programming offered by the RGASC continues to be a challenge. With the return to in-person activities, some graduate students have

expressed overall exhaustion that prevents them from seeking out extra-curricular programming or support. Though graduate students may have the desire to attend programming and may be aware of the supports available at the RGASC, responsibilities related to their own graduate work, teaching, and research take up the majority of their time. Additionally, graduate students who arrived to UTM during the early times of the COVID-19 pandemic may not have as strong of a familiarity of the RGASC and the supports available.

Instructor Support – Educational Development

The RGASC Educational Development team provides pedagogical support to UTM Instructors of all ranks through individual consultations and programming. The overarching goal of the Educational Developers is to help UTM function effectively as a teaching and learning community.

Individual Consultations

The Educational Development team supported instructors in nearly 250 individual consultations. Nearly half (41%) of all consultations required subsequent meetings. Accessible pedagogy (14% of all consultations) was the most common consultation topic, followed by support for teaching in the active learning classrooms (11%), course design (11%), and teaching dossiers (11%). The RGASC supported instructors across departments at UTM. Instructors from ISUP, Mathematics and Computational Sciences, Biology, ICCIT, Historical Studies, and Sociology most often sought one-on-one consultations. Most of our consultations continue to occur online (66%) despite offering both on campus and online options. The majority of the consultation requests (95%) received came via personal emails to individual Educational Developers. The remaining five percent were received through the UTM Instructional Support Portal.

The RGASC Educational Developers conducted 14 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 pedagogy. This feedback averaged two to four pages in length.

Educational Development Programming

Workshops

We developed, supported, and facilitated several workshops during 2022-23. Four workshops were offered on campus and four were offered online, including:

- Preparing a Teaching Development & Innovation Grant Proposal
- UDL Basics and Guidelines
- Reflective Teaching
- Supporting ADHD Learners (facilitated by guest speaker Karen Costa)
- Meaningful Student Portfolios
- Preparing a Teaching Dossier
- Artificial Intelligence and Teaching

Pedagogical Reading Groups

The RGASC Educational Developers facilitated seven pedagogical reading groups: two in Summer 2022, two in Fall 2022, and three in Winter 2023. The groups of faculty and staff 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.

A total of 26 unique instructors from 11 different UTM departments participated in the pedagogical reading groups. This year's reading groups focused on the following books:

- *Academic Ableism: Disability And Higher Education* by Jay Dolmage
- *Creating Engaging Discussions* by Herman and Nilson
- *Geeky Pedagogy: A Guide for Intellectuals, Introverts, and Nerds Who Want to Be Effective Teachers* by Jessamyn Neuhaus
- *How Humans Learn: The Science and Stories behind Effective College Teaching* by Joshua R. Eyster
- *Kandassowin 2nd Edition, How We Come to Know: Indigenous Re-Search Methodologies* by Kathleen Absolon
- *Reach Everyone, Teach Everyone: Universal Design for Learning in Higher Education* by Thomas J. Tobin and Kirsten T. Behling
- *Specifications Grading* by Linda B. Nilson

UTM Summer Camp

The RGASC Educational Development team offered the UTM Summer Camp 3-day workshop series for faculty in July 2022. There were three thematic areas of focus for this year's summer camp: inclusive pedagogy, assessment, and pedagogies of care. Participants were given continued access to a course shell and resources. Quercus analytics suggest that participants continue to refer back to the course shell and resources after the conclusion of the camp. Thirty-six instructors participated in summer camp.

Celebration of Teaching Excellence

In collaboration with the UTM Dean's Office, the RGASC Educational Developers coordinated the first annual celebration of UTM's recent teaching award recipients. We had an excellent turnout for this event and look forward to hosting the second annual Celebration of Teaching Excellence in the spring of 2023.

Collaborations and Outreach

The RGASC Educational Development team engaged in a number of internal and external collaborations and outreach activities in 2022-23.

Internal

- In collaboration with the U of T AODA Office, co-facilitated Universal Design 101, which provided all staff with key resources, tips and techniques to support the embedding of universal design principles in all aspects of their work.
- Contributed a session to the programming for U of T Queer Orientation. The session, titled Beyond the Reading List: Pedagogies of Belonging, asked participants to reflect on ways to support 2SLGBTQ+ learners through inclusive pedagogy that considers pronoun use, assessment examples, and word choice.
- Supported for UTM Career Centre as they work to integrate Universal Design for Learning into their programming and supports.
- Collaborated with the Black Research Network to design, maintain, and implement the Black Brilliance Project in STEM project which is a living, community-driven archive of Black researchers in STEM from U of T and beyond. The repository houses prominent Black scientists, mathematicians, innovators, engineers, and leaders in STEM, and provides instructors with an excellent research tool for diversifying their course content.
- Designed and facilitated an introductory workshop focused on inclusive teaching for the Department of Geography, Geomatics, and Environment.
- Collaborated on a LEAF Impact Grant that aims to build truth and reconciliation into the UTM Biology curriculum. This project includes the development of a new, 200-level course, learning circles, and module development for existing courses.
- Collaborated with the UTM Library & Instructional Technologies to develop and facilitate a workshop focused on using peer assessments to support student learning.
- Collaborated with the UTM Library & Instructional Technologies to offer an ask me anything (AMA) session focused on rubrics.
- Co-facilitated a community of practice focused on cross-cultural learnings that aim to support a more inclusive learning environment for students and build awareness of Indigenous pedagogies and knowledge. Supported by PEFAL funding, this year three activities were organized: a medicine walk at the UTM campus, a walking tour of Tkaronto, and a winter hike at Crawford Lake.
- Chaired three of four working groups for ISUP's EDI Committee.
- Contributed to the teaching support section of the New Faculty and Librarian Orientation organized by the Office of the Vice-Provost, Faculty & Academic Life.
- Chaired and coordinated the Active Learning Classroom Operation Committee (ALCOG). ALCOG discusses issues and implements solutions that can improve the experience of active learning classrooms from pedagogical, accessible, and technological perspectives.
- Designed and facilitated a workshop on course design for UTM's New Faculty Orientation.

External

- Spearheaded the development of a community of practice (CoP) for Canadian Education Developers that focuses on anti-oppressive pedagogies. The CoP is a meaningful space for educators to share resources, collaborate on projects, and exchange ideas and best practices. It has also been instrumental in fostering meaningful connections, as this CoP encourages Educational Developers to come together, reflect and receive support from one another.
- Facilitated a discussion group focused on trauma-informed UDL.
- Co-facilitated a community of practice focused on supporting neurodivergent learners. The group includes members from Niagara College, George Brown College, and University of Alberta.
- Contributed to the POD 2022 Annual Conference.

Key Projects

In addition to the programming described above, the Educational Developers worked on a number of key projects. These projects included the:

- Creation of resources aimed at improving accessibility for the UTM community. Resources titles include:
 - Accessible Communication Strategies
 - Accessibility Considerations in Active Learning Classrooms
 - Accessible Pedagogy Considerations
 - Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Overview
 - Accessible Presentation Considerations
- Creation of Anti-Black Racism Pedagogical Collection (LibGuide). This pedagogical collection contains a curated list of resources related to challenging anti-Black racism in the classroom and other strategies to create safe and supportive educational spaces for all learners. The guide will be updated regularly to reflect the latest research in fostering inclusive classrooms and to support UTM instructors in ensuring equitable learning for all students. It is hosted on the UTM Library website.
- Development of a database of active learning activities that be implemented in ALCs at UTM and adapted for regular classrooms or online learning. We plan to create videos of activities in action as an additional modality for text-based descriptions of activities in the database.
- Development and creation of Supporting Neurodiversity workshop series for ISUP. Two workshops were created. The first workshop focused on terminology use and communication strategies that should be considered to create a more inclusive and accessible environment. The second workshop focused on organizational strategies that support neurodiversity.

- Formation of a generative artificial intelligence working group to help the Educational Development team discuss strategies for supporting pedagogical uses of generative AI.

Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities

This year we expanded the Educational Development team from two Educational Developers to six Educational Developers. As a result, much of our energy this year was focused on relationship and capacity building. We found that workshops and events held on campus were often poorly attended, though we had some encouraging participation in March and April of 2023. Rebuilding a strong teaching and learning community on campus is a challenge we will continue to work on during the upcoming academic year. While there are several departments that engage with the Educational Development team regularly, we continue to have departments that we rarely interact with (Economics, English and Drama, Visual Studies, Chemical and Physical Sciences, Philosophy, and Psychology).

Over the next academic year, we hope to expand the number of UTM instructors that we support. We will continue to connect with new instructors through participation in new faculty orientations and by reaching out personally to share an overview of the support we offer. We will connect with departments to identify unmet pedagogical support needs.

We will continue to support the teaching and learning community at UTM by offering a range of opportunities for instructors, librarians, teaching assistants, and staff to share teaching challenges and expertise to build connections across departments. We will continue to rebuild the community for practice for instructors teaching in UTM's active learning classrooms.

We will celebrate the inspiring accomplishments of our teaching award winners and will collaborate with department Chairs and Dean's Office to recognize teaching excellence of UTM instructors through tri-campus and local teaching awards.

We will expand programming, resources and consultation opportunities related to anti-oppressive pedagogies, anti-racist pedagogies, Indigenous pedagogies, and accessible pedagogies, creating space for the UTM teaching and learning community to identify and discuss systemic barriers.

We will develop research-based resources and support related to pedagogical possibilities and challenges presented by generative artificial intelligence tools.

Promotion and Outreach

Print Materials

The RGASC has expanded its communications through the creation of new print materials including a new brochure and including posters and postcards. Expanding promotional materials has increased our presence in the UTM community and has made it easier to connect not only with students, but faculty and visiting parents as well. Our new print materials have been used at multiple events to promote the RGASC including: March Open House, and Winter Exam Jam, and have been distributed across the UTM campus. As many students began their studies at UTM online during the height of the pandemic it is important for us to increase our presence in both physical and digital spaces.

Website

The RGASC website has been updated to increase ease of navigation and to promote our core programming. The front page now features a panel of current programming that is updated according to the time of year. This panel includes programs such as PART, FSGs, and the Caribbean Black Writing Collective. Navigation has also been improved by linking high traffic web pages such as online resources and the appointments pages to increase appointment booking. The FSG and PART pages have been improved with additional graphics, formatting, and editing to increase readability and accessibility. Tools such as the WAVE accessibility checker ensure that the contrast and headings of our webpages are accessible. Rather than using PDFs alone to convey scheduling information the website now includes Drupal tables for greater accessibility. Going forward, the RGASC will continue to increase the ease of navigation and accessibility of the website while maintaining RGASC branding and aesthetics.

The RGASC May 2022 – April 2023 website analytics show a 22.9% increase in unique page views and a decrease in a 5.9% decrease in the overall bounce rate in comparison to the prior year (May 2021 – April 2022). Overall, more people are visiting the website and less are leaving after viewing a single page.

Additionally, there was a 29.9% decrease in the number of exits on the home page and a 24.4.% decrease in average time spent on the home page. This means that less people are exiting their browsing session on the homepage, and more people may be navigating to program or audience specific information at a greater speed. The top three pages of the website were the home page (10,090 unique page views), the undergraduate appointments page (6580 unique page views), and the undergraduate students page (6108 unique page views), which lists programs and resources for undergraduate students.

Social Media

The RGASC closed its Facebook page in February 2023 due to low engagement and low relevancy with the target student demographic. This will allow for more focus on Instagram and Twitter engagement. Due to staffing changes, there was a decrease in Instagram posts. Despite fewer posts there was an increase in total views, stories, and followers. Due to changes with Twitter some of the past analytics are inconsistent or not available and are therefore not included in these metrics. The RGASC will continue to expand its reach on social media with additional resources including work-study students to create student-focused content, and tools to increase efficiency such as content schedulers and content calendars.

Other Projects and Partnerships

Mississauga Academy of Medicine

The partnership between the RGASC, the Office of Learner Affairs (OLA) and the Mississauga Academy Medicine (MAM) has continued into this second year. The partnership first began 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. Dr. Ibrahim conducted student appointments from January 2022 to April 2023. Moving forward student appointments will now be offered by a learning strategist from the RGASC.

In 2022-23, appointments were offered in person and online and in 30 minute and one hour time slots. Most student appointments were made through referrals for students who had failed a Mastery Exercise or were flagged for needing study support due to academic issues. MAM students were made aware of these appointments through the monthly MAM newsletter, the OLA website, and a presentation made by Dr. Ibrahim at the August 2022 orientation.

Following last year's report about our work with MAM, it was recommended that next steps required student education on metacognition and learning methods, such as collaborative learning, multitasking vs. single tasking, problem solving, and imposter syndrome. As a response, in collaboration with Kathleen Ogden from St. George campus, we developed proactive sessions to be included in the Medical Education program (as student appointments are primarily reactive). Instructor Dr. Kien Deng, is collaborating with us to include and design a module for metacognitive awareness for students in her Intro to Clerkship course. This is a curricular innovation for the program as it has not been offered before. Work will continue through summer 2022, and the 2-hour module will be taught during the August 21-25th 2023 course run time. This initiative is important and will lead to next steps towards integrating regular workshops for Medicine students to deepen their learning strategies and develop metacognitive awareness.