

## Information Literacy Strategy 2015-18

### Introduction - What is Information Literacy?

Information Literacy has been described as “The core literacy which makes the others possible” (Garner, 2006).

Providing a clear definition of information literacy is the first step towards our full engagement with the concept:

“Knowing when and why you need information, where to find it, and how to evaluate, use and communicate it in an ethical manner” (CILIP, 2004).

Specifically:

- Recognising a need for information.
- Acquiring knowledge of the resources available.
- How to find information.
- Recognising the need to evaluate search results and information from varied sources and formats.
- Knowing how to work with or exploit results.
- Being aware of ethics and responsibility of use.
- Knowing how to communicate or share your findings.
- Knowing how to manage your findings.

We face an ever increasing quantity of information in our lives within Higher Education, delivered in a variety of formats across a range of devices, and accessed via numerous routes. The information our students find may not have been discovered by searching dedicated academic portals such as library interfaces, subject databases, or via high quality sources of professional information. Many students will initially find the range and volume of information overwhelming and the currency, format, structure and quality of the information difficult to identify, manage and evaluate. These factors have a negative impact on their academic work and on their chances of realising their full potential – in terms of academic achievement, lifelong learning and employability.

The value of information literacy as central to the concept of lifelong learning is highlighted by the *Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy* (UNESCO, 2005), together with the empowering qualities that information literacy fosters in individuals and its essential contribution towards attaining personal, social, occupational and educational goals in an inclusive society.

Information literacy skills are specifically highlighted within QMUL’s range of graduate attributes. These help to define the most significant and ambitious elements of the learning experience at QMUL, achievable through study and engagement with high quality teaching and research, and the through fostering the behaviours, values, skills and knowledge we expect all our students to develop.

## **Graduate Attributes - Information Expertise**

- Identify information needs appropriate to different situations
- Use technologies to access and interpret information effectively
- Critically evaluate the reliability of different sources of information
- Use information for evidence-based decision-making and creative thinking

The diversity of our students and their learning styles necessitates a clear, concise and flexible approach to information literacy skills and emphasises the need to identify and establish meaningful components of the highest relevance to all.

## **Information Literacy Skills in QMUL Strategy**

Finding and using information forms an essential aspect of studying at QMUL and is reflected in a wider framework of strategy. Our current development of innovative information literacy skills teaching and learning support materials underpins key college strategic objectives and core values:

- ***The QMUL Student Experience, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2014*** is explicit that information literacy should be prioritised over the next three years within its first strategic aim of *ensuring a high quality learning experience for all students*.

The third strategic aim of *developing staff excellence in teaching and student support* clearly emphasises importance of developing motivated, well-trained staff in order to foster the expertise required to achieve this goal.

Our approach to the development and delivery of Information Literacy Skills teaching and supporting materials by the Library's Teaching and Learning Support Team directly reflects the aims of:

- ***QMUL Professional Services Strategy 2014***  
*Strategic aim 2 - to develop excellence within our professional services staff and leaders*  
*Strategic aim 3 - to deliver quality services*  
*Strategic aim 4 - to continually improve our processes and systems*
- ***QMUL Strategy 2014 – the Next Five Years***  
*Strategic Aim 3: to provide all our students, wherever based, an education that is judged internationally to be of the highest quality, and which exploits innovations in teaching, learning and assessment.*
- ***QMUL Careers and Enterprise Strategic Plan 2014-19***  
*Mission – provide products and services of the highest quality that help individuals achieve and maintain career success*

## **Who Teaches Information Literacy Skills?**

Our dedicated Teaching and Learning Support Team of Faculty Liaison Librarians and Information Assistants ensure information literacy skills teaching and support is delivered to the highest standards.

The team works closely with the Faculties and Schools at QMUL, and with our colleagues in the Learning Development Team and Centre for Academic and Professional Development, to deliver Information Literacy Skills teaching and develop supporting materials and to promote information literacy throughout QMUL.

Teaching and Learning Support team members have a range of postgraduate qualifications in information management and teaching and we aim to ensure that all members of the team are engaged with formal accreditation of teaching by 2018.

## **Working with our Stakeholders**

- **Secondary Schools**

The Library's has created strong links with local schools as part of its own outreach activities and through those of the QMUL Faculties working within the Widening Participation strategy and with UK Recruitment.

### ***Pupils***

By liaising with schools, encouraging school visits, and holding subject-focussed information literacy sessions in our libraries for a wide range of pupils, we seek to manage the transition from school to university in a supportive and informative way. We aim to ensure students are well prepared for the continued development of their information literacy skills throughout their time at university

### ***Teachers***

Establishing a dialogue with teachers at QMUL Teacher Days and other outreach events helps us provide effective information literacy skills teaching to our new students by gathering information about current coverage of information literacy in schools, and by providing teachers with clear information about what information literacy skills are expected of students at university.

- **Undergraduate Students**

Managing information literacy skills during the transition from school to university, clarifying realistic expectations and the benefits of engaging with information literacy skills are crucial activities during the first year of Undergraduate programmes.

Embedding information literacy skills content within Undergraduate modules and providing additional support at key deadlines with students' timetables e.g. during assignment and project work, helps us maximise the effectiveness and relevance of information literacy skills to undergraduates, especially during the transition from using resources specifically recommended via reading lists to alternative, broader sources of information discovered as part of largely self-directed study.

- **Taught Postgraduate Students**

Taught Postgraduate students at QMUL may progress directly from undergraduate to postgraduate programmes. International and mature students also constitute a significant and growing part of our taught Postgraduate student cohort, forming a particularly diverse

group in terms of their information literacy skills experience when commencing their programmes of study.

Taught Postgraduate students have a relatively short time frame to engage with information literacy skills. Our support must be appropriately timed, relevant to academic programme content, and flexible in coverage in order to ensure its effectiveness.

- **Researchers**

Staff from the Teaching and Learning Support Team are instrumental in delivering information literacy skills support to researchers as part of the Researcher Development Framework (RDF) and its accredited series of workshops and training sessions. TLS team members will continue to be pro-actively involved in these activities, in close collaboration with the Student Services Research Support Team, the Learning Development Team and our colleagues within the Centre for Professional and Academic Development (CAPD). The Vitae Researcher Development Statement (Vitae, 2010) identifies Information Literacy as a key component in the process of developing excellent research skills.

- **Staff**

New members of academic and research staff receive inductions from Faculty Liaison Librarians, introducing services and resources available to support their teaching, research and professional development. Staff from the Teaching and Learning Support Team will engage pro-actively with Academic and Professional Services staff to highlight the importance of Information Literacy Skills and to encourage the development of embedded information literacy components in all programmes of study.

## **Aims**

Our aims are:

- To ensure that every student is supported in improving their information literacy skills throughout their time at QMUL
- To equip our students with the information literacy skills that will help them make the strongest academic arguments and achieve the highest grades
- To help equip our students with the graduate skills required by employers
- To provide every opportunity to help students and staff to use the full range of our information resources in the most effective and timely way

- To impart confidence and expertise in our students and staff when defining their information needs and in locating and evaluating information of the highest relevance
- To provide a framework for embedding core transferable, information literacy skills components throughout the curriculum across all of our Faculties
- To target specific opportunities to develop and implement new approaches to information literacy across the three faculties at QMUL, creating transferable examples of good practice in each
- To develop and deliver engaging, sustainable and interactive delivery methods
- To develop and deliver a structured portfolio of activities and innovative supporting materials in a range of media
- To regularly monitor and encourage the professional development activities of staff involved in delivering information literacy skills training and designing supporting learning materials, in order to ensure currency and effectiveness is maximised.

## Delivery

We are committed to creating opportunities for all our students to engage with information literacy skills by delivering a blended range of learning activities, combining high quality teaching with online media in order to meet demand effectively and provide accessible and sustainable support during a period of significant growth in our diverse student population.

Our delivery methods include:

- Timetabled group sessions, forming integral components of academic modules
- Timetabled group sessions, forming integral components of independent research skills modules in specific subject areas
- Stand- alone large group sessions
- Subject focussed drop-in sessions held in Schools and in the QMUL libraries, small group and 1-1 advice
- Development and provision of innovative learning tools and supporting materials via QMplus and the Library Website, designed to encourage and support e, self-directed and distance learning e.g. Find it! Use it! Reference it! The *Information Literacy Skills Knowledge Bank on QMplus*: <http://qplus.qmul.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=4370>
- Development of resources and interfaces that are best suited to provide effective information literacy skills support to distance learners and to our growing number of international programmes of study

- Answering enquiries and questions about information literacy skills in person, via e-mail, QMplus, and QMUL Service Desk

We ask Schools and Departments to engage collaboratively with our commitment to delivering excellent information literacy support to our students by giving serious consideration to the benefits of timeliness, relevance and good attendance achieved by embedding ILS activities into the academic curriculum, and by providing us with the following information in advance of all ILS sessions:

- Group size
- Relevant examples of module information and content
- Prospective and confirmed session dates
- Academic and administrative contact information
- Advance notification in instances of changes of venue or timetable

If we are unable to offer in-person teaching (e.g. due to a request for it being received at the last minute) we will make every effort to direct academic staff to appropriate online information literacy skills material that will provide support to their students. Online material also provides support to our distance learners and those students with special needs e.g. disability and dyslexia.

## **Evaluation and Development**

Evaluating and developing our teaching methods and supporting learning materials is a crucial aspect of delivering effective and sustainable information literacy skills tuition. We will:

- Utilise the InformAll criteria (InformAll, 2014), designed to support the development and evaluation of information literacy teaching and supporting materials within HE institutions
- Collect and evaluate feedback and attendance statistics from all information literacy skills activities in order to ensure currency and relevance of session content and delivery
- Reflect feedback in future development of teaching and supporting materials
- Ensure feedback is shared effectively within the institution, within Professional Services and within the academic community, as appropriate
- Encourage a culture of peer-observation of information literacy skills sessions, including observation by members of other Student Services teams, the Centre for Academic and Professional Development and by academic staff

- Monitor and incorporate current developments, process models, initiatives and related technologies when teaching information skills
- Develop our teaching skills and our awareness of relevant information resources, services and platforms. We aim to have all members of the team engaged with formal accreditation of teaching by 2018. e.g.HEA
- Regularly report and publicise our developments in delivering innovative information literacy skills teaching and learning materials at appropriate forums within QMUL and externally
- Develop and publicise good practice case studies

### **Measuring Impact**

We will closely monitor the results of all surveys which measure the impact of Library Services at QMUL and include coverage of information literacy skills e.g. National Student Survey and LibQual.

We will make every effort to assess the impact of our information literacy activities on the academic success and attainments of students by accessing relevant sources of information, including the grading of course work, examination performance and employment rate, student retention and the evaluation of student bibliographies

We will continue to ensure measures of impact are incorporated into feedback from all information literacy skills teaching activities, including e.g. self-assessment surveys covering specific skills and confidence pre-and post-instruction

We will examine and evaluate statistics which show the impact of our information literacy skills strategy, teaching and supporting material:

Sources of statistics will include

- Enquiries
- Use of E-resources
- Use of the Teaching Collection
- Use of online ILS supporting materials
- Attendance of taught information literacy skills sessions

We will use statistics and information from the above sources to benchmark QMUL against our comparator institutions via information collected and provided by the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) and Research Libraries UK (RLUK)

## **Next Steps**

We will utilise National Student Survey and LibQual results and module evaluation information to identify priority areas for the pro-active development of information literacy skills support within the QMUL curriculum and to identify gaps in our current provision.

*e.g. Comments from XXX students suggest they need more support with searching of library resources. We will work with lecturers on this programme to develop basic library skills.*

We will survey module/programme leaders in order to evaluate the progress of the Information Literacy Skills strategy and further develop its immediate focus.

The survey will investigate:

- Type of information literacy skills instruction
- Impact of information literacy skills instruction
- The timing and delivery of our teaching - When and who?
- Preferred services for the future

We will establish the following criteria, based on current professional practice (Open University, 2012) and analysis of the learning outcomes of our own information literacy skills materials in order to monitor the progression and development of our students' information literacy skills throughout their time at QMUL. These criteria will provide a clear structure for the learning outcomes of our teaching sessions and of engagement with our teaching, learning materials and information resources:



## Information Literacy Skills Development Criteria

Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding the concept of information literacy skills and their contribution to lifelong learning and employability</li> <li>• Recognising a need for information</li> <li>• Identifying key resources, access routes and basic search techniques</li> <li>• Distinguishing between scholarly and popular literature</li> <li>• Confidence in evaluating information retrieved for purpose with relevance to specific coursework and academic study</li> <li>• Awareness of a range of information formats</li> <li>• A clear understanding of the ethical use of information, plagiarism and how to reference sources of information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an increased knowledge of specific information resources</li> <li>• Planning and recording searches and developing a range of search techniques</li> <li>• Awareness of the measures of academic impact of published research</li> <li>• Increased awareness and expertise in citation management techniques and the functionality of citation management software</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Awareness of primary and secondary resources</li> <li>• Awareness of full range of relevant information formats and characteristics of each</li> <li>• Awareness of relevant resources from multiple disciplines</li> <li>• Confidence and expertise in scheduling, planning and carrying out a comprehensive literature search and literature review within a highly specific subject focus</li> <li>• Confidence in developing and recording a clear search strategy and modifying as appropriate as research progresses</li> <li>• Using sophisticated search techniques</li> <li>• Awareness of appropriate data management techniques</li> <li>• Awareness of the range and functionality of several citation management software packages, sophisticated citation management techniques</li> <li>• Awareness of open-access publishing options and requirements</li> </ul>

## Summary

Students who are pro-actively encouraged to develop their information literacy skills and are supported throughout their programme of study by high quality information literacy skills teaching and supporting materials, delivered by highly motivated and expert staff, will experience a positive impact on their academic achievement, lifelong learning experience, and employability potential.

Martin Beeson  
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**Appendix 1:** InformAll criteria for describing, reviewing and evaluating practice in information literacy training

**Part A: criteria for describing and reviewing your course or resource**

<b>Preamble</b>	
Have you defined clear aims, objectives and learning outcomes for the course/resource?	Y/N
<b>1.1 Learners: who is it aimed at? Name of course/resource:</b>	
1.1.1 What career stage(s) is the course/resource addressed at? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undergraduate student <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Postgraduate/research student <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Postdoctoral/Research Fellow <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Tenured researcher (lecturer, reader) <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Professorial/senior level <input type="checkbox"/></li> <li>• Other <input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	
1.1.2. What disciplinary area(s) is the course/resource addressed at?	
<b>1.2 Need</b>	
1.2.1. Have you undertaken an assessment of learners' needs?	Y/N
1.2.2. Does the course/resource fit the broader professional needs of the learners?	Y/N/NA
1.2.3. Does the course/resource fit with your institutional and/or departmental policy and practice on researcher development?	Y/N
1.2.4. Does the course/resource relate to expectations or requirements from relevant professional bodies?	Y/N
1.2.5. Can the course/resource be transferred or adapted to suit other needs or contexts from the one for which it was designed?	Y/N
1.2.6. Is the course/resource accessible, particularly for learners with special needs or disabilities such as visual impairment?	Y/N
<b>1.3 Demand</b>	
1.3.1. Is the course/resource a response to demand from learners?	Y/N
1.3.2 Is participation by learners in previous similar training activities a factor in helping you determine demand?	Y/N
<b>1.4 Meeting requirements</b>	
1.4.1. Does the course/resource or resource take into account of:	
• Current level of skill	Y/N
• Years of experience	Y/N
• Disciplinary areas	Y/N
5.3.1 Are there any prerequisites in terms of what learners need to know already in order to derive the most benefit from the course?	Y/N

## Part B: criteria for evaluating your course or resource

<b>4.1 Numbers</b>	
How many learners have taken part in the course or used the resource?	
<b>4.2 Feedback</b>	
Did participants give feedback on:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whether learning objectives met</li> </ul>	Y/N/didn't ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of course/resource</li> </ul>	Y/N/didn't ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Originality of course/resource</li> </ul>	Y/N/didn't ask
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractiveness of course/resource</li> </ul>	Y/N/didn't ask
<b>5.1 Impact on knowledge and skills</b>	
Have you evaluated changes in learners' knowledge, skills and competencies resulting from the course/resource?	
<b>5.2 Behaviour and attitudes</b>	
Have you evaluated improvements that may be attributable to the course/resource in terms of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attitudes</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance and practice</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>5.3 High-level impact</b>	
5.3.1 Have you evaluated the broader impact of the course/resource in terms of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent to which recipients have become better learners and/or researchers</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ways in which the institution has benefitted</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3.2 Has there been any feedback from the departments in which the recipients study/work?	Y/N
<b>5.4 Challenges/barriers</b>	
Have you encountered any challenges and/or barriers (including lack of resources) when implementing the course/resource?	Y/N
<b>5.5 Steps taken</b>	
Have you taken any steps to improve the course/resource as a result to any of the evaluation, as covered by the previous questions?	Y/N