

ILSP staff survey: Policy evaluation report.

June 2024 (addendum August 2024)

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Author.

Chris Boyko, LICA EDI Co-chair. June 2024.

INTRODUCTION

This academic year (2023/24), the five sections within LICA -- Architecture, Design, Film, Fine Art and Theatre -- adopted their own policies to better support students with Inclusive Learning and Support Plans (ILSPs). The policies were created so that staff associated with teaching could be more proactive in addressing students' needs.

The LICA Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee was interested in evaluating the impact of those policies on students with an eye towards possibly improving them in future. As part of understanding this impact, the Committee designed a survey to find out about staff experiences. The survey consisted mostly of multiple-choice questions with some open text response questions.

All LICA staff involved with teaching were sent an initial email on Monday, 13 May, 2024, from Jane Quinn (LICA Departmental Officer). The email contained a description of the survey, a survey link and a link to Lancaster University's ILSP policy. Follow-up reminder emails were sent to the same staff on each of the following 3 weeks, with a final reminder email sent on Tuesday, 4 June, 2024.

Of the 92 LICA staff who received the emails, 18 completed or nearly completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 20%.

The following sections outline the findings from the survey. In addition to the survey, an online focus group took place on Thursday, 4 July, 2024 with members of the LICA Administrative Services team. The purpose of the focus group was to better understand how members of Administrative Services managed ILSPs within the department and what concerns or challenges they had in relation to the new LICA ILSP policies.

The report concludes with a list of actions, based on the survey and focus group.

Survey findings: Contact with students

The first question asked when staff were involved in teaching during the academic year. Of the 17 staff who responded to this question, 16 (94%) said they were involved in teaching in Term 1, 16 (94%) said they were involved in teaching in Term 2, and 14 (82%) said they were involved in teaching in Term 3 (see Figure 1).

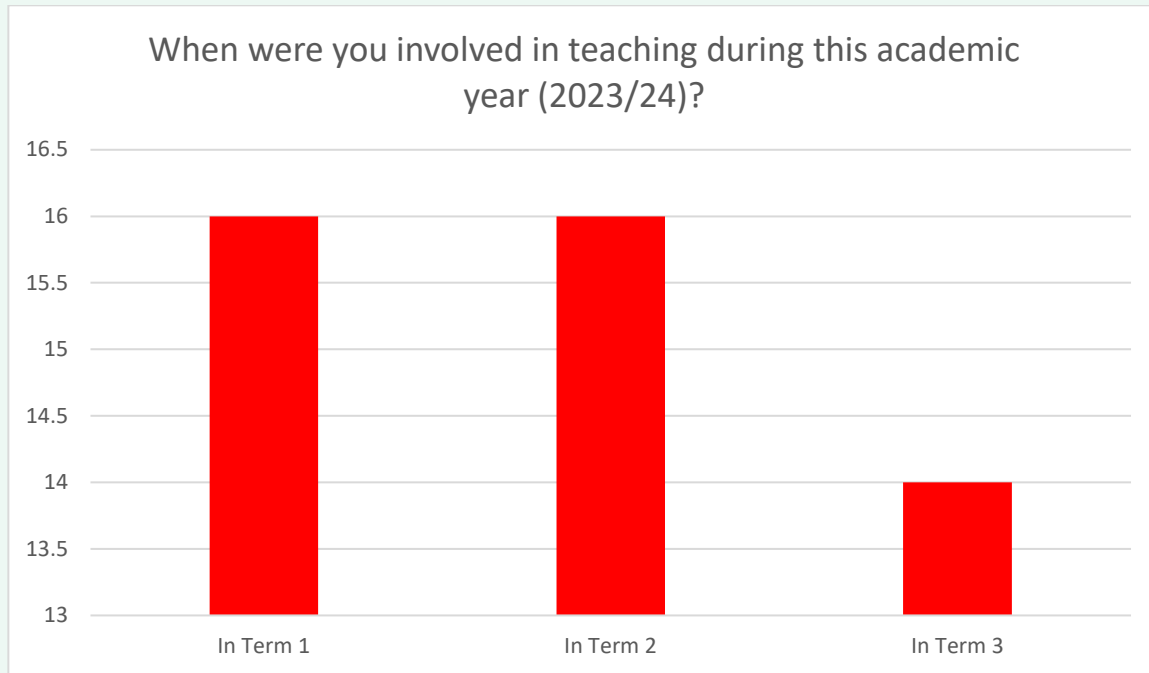


Figure 1. When were you involved in teaching during this academic year (2023/24)?

The second question asked when staff contacted students to discuss their ILSPs during the academic year. Of the 17 staff who responded, 13 (76%) said they had contacted students in Term 1, 8 (47%) said they contacted students in Term 2 and 3 (18%) said they contacted students in Term 3. There were also 3 (18%) of respondents who said that they had not contacted students with ILSPs (see Figure 2).

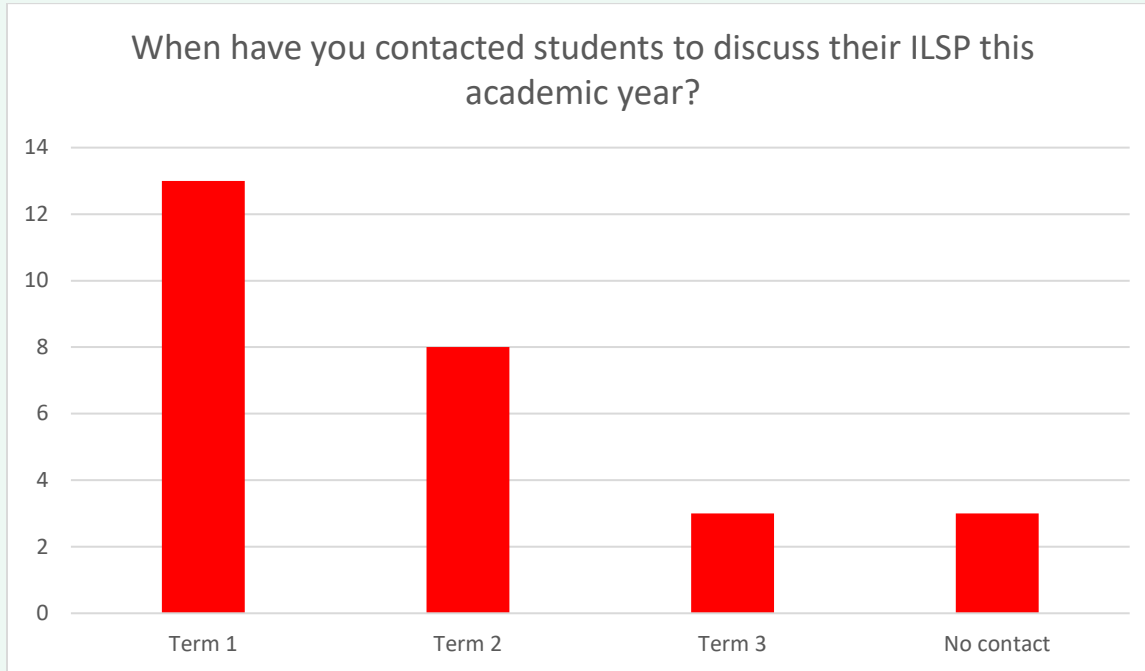


Figure 2. When were you contact by LICA staff to discuss your ILSP this academic year?

In summary, most staff who completed the survey said that they worked in Terms 1 and 2, with many directly contacting students with ILSPs in Term 1. The findings also show that the proportion of staff directly contacting students with ILSPs reduces in Terms 2 and 3. This could suggest that staff did not bother to reach out to students with ILSPs after the end of Term 1; another, more likely explanation is that staff repeatedly saw the same students across Terms 1-3 and discussed their ILSP needs at the beginning of the year.

Survey findings: Sharing ILSPs

The third question asked how staff have accessed, or been given access to, students' ILSPs over this academic year. Of the 14 staff who responded, 12 (86%) said that a member of Administrative Services sent them links to students' ILSPs, 1 (7%) used LUSI to find students' ILSPs and 1 (7%) have not accessed, or been given access to, students' ILSPs (see Figure 3).

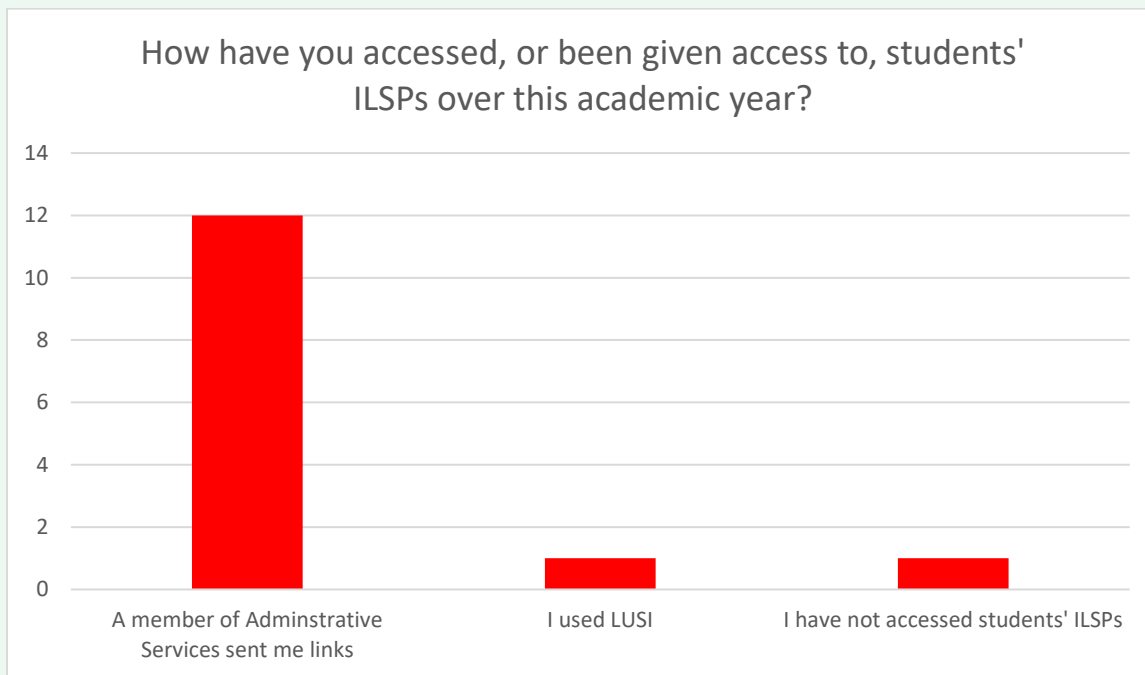


Figure 3. How have you accessed, or been given access to, students' ILSPs over this academic year?

The fourth question asked staff whether they shared ILSPs with anyone involved in their teaching. Of the 14 staff who responded, there were 8 (57%) responses relating to sharing ILSPs with Associate Lecturers, 3 (21%) responses relating to sharing ILSPs with tutors, and 1 (7%) response each relating to sharing ILSPs with the module convenor, a member of Technical Services and other. There were an additional 5 (36%) responses, stating that staff had not shared ILSPs with anyone (see Figure 4).

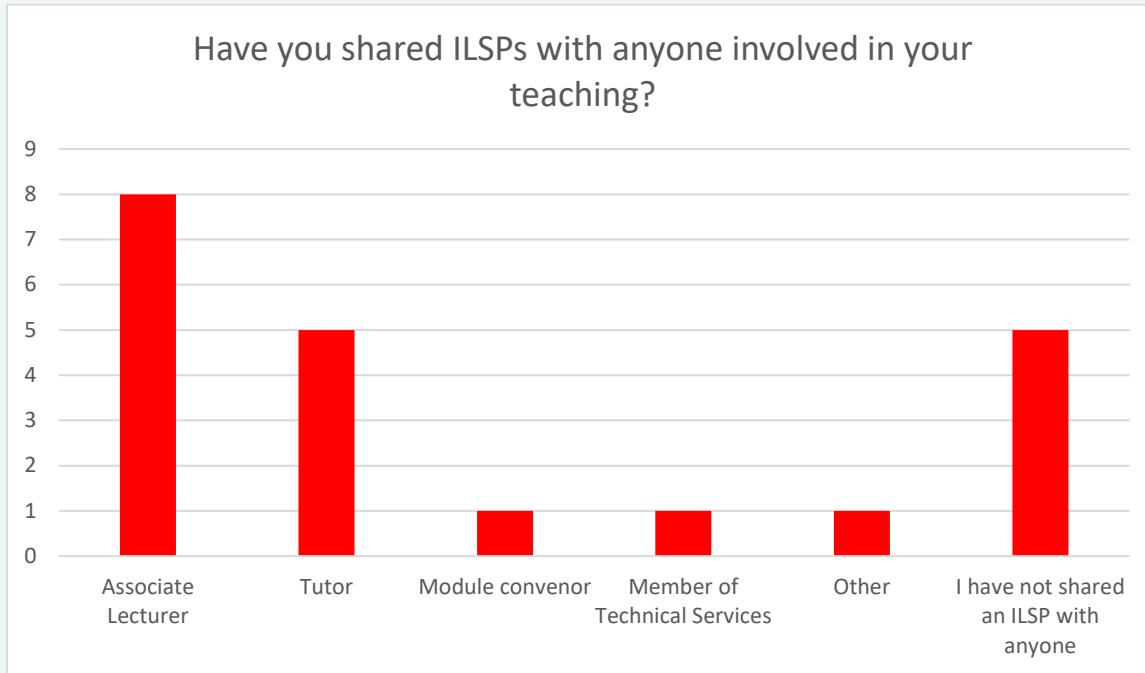


Figure 4. Have you shared ILSPs with anyone involved in your teaching?

For the fifth question, staff were asked how they reached out to students with ILSPs. Of the 14 staff who responded, there were 10 (71%) responses that mentioned email, 7 (50%) that mentioned in-person interactions, 3 (21%) that mentioned making a general announcement in-class, 2 (14%) that mentioned making a general announcement on Moodle or Teams module pages and 2 (14%) that mention online interactions. There were 2 (14%) responses that mentioned not reaching out to students with ILSPs (see Figure 5).

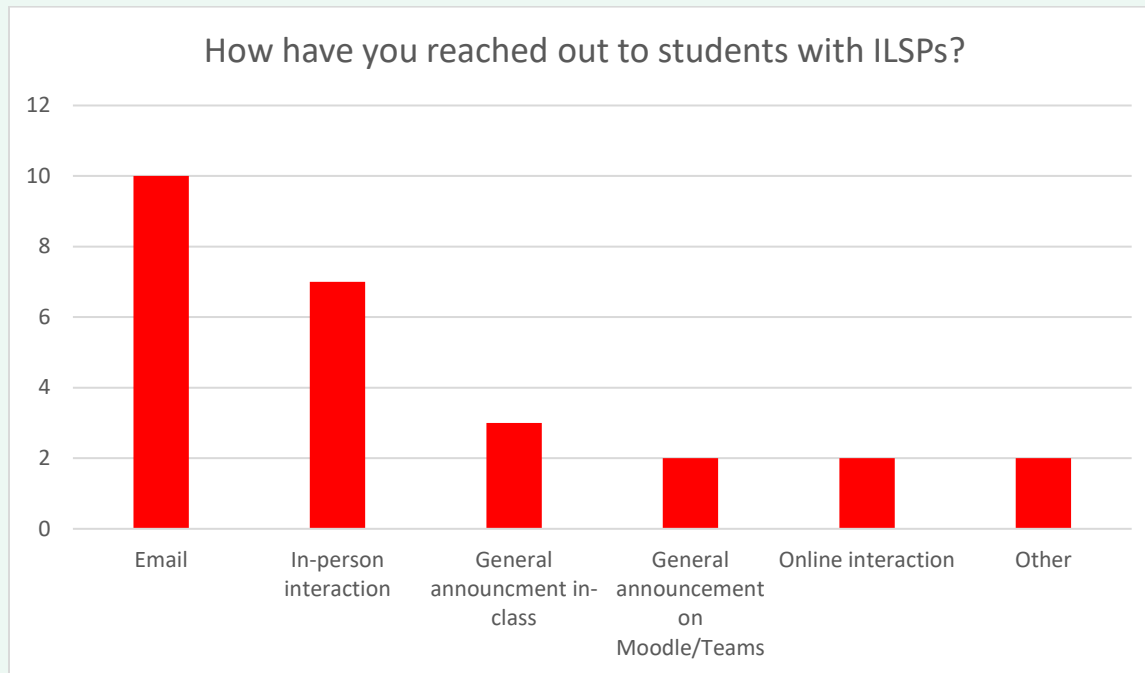


Figure 5. How have you reached out to students with ILSPs?

The sixth question asked staff how students with ILSPs had reached out to them. Of the 14 responses, 7 (50%) responses mentioned email, 5 (36%) responses mentioned in-person interaction and 3 (21%) responses mentioned online interaction. There were 6 (43%) responses that mentioned students with ILSPs not reaching out to staff (see Figure 6).

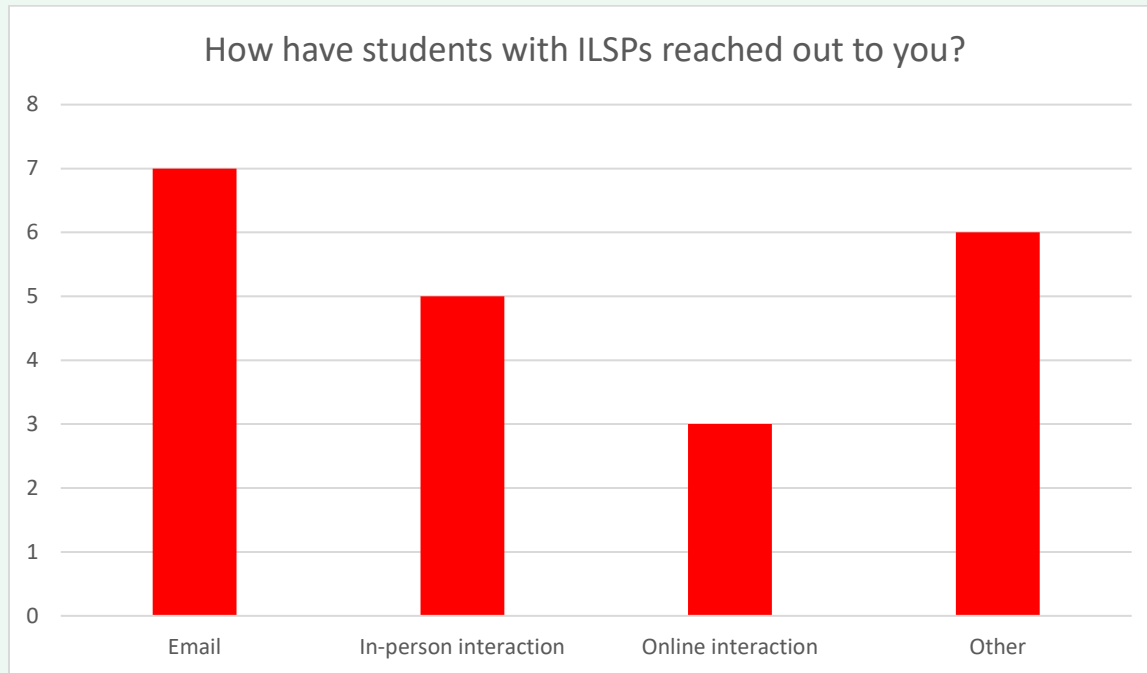


Figure 6. How have students with ILSPs reached out to you?

In summary, most staff who completed the survey said that members of Administrative Services gave them access to their students' ILSPs, with only 1 staff member saying that they accessed LUSI to obtain their students' ILSPs. When asked whether they shared ILSPs with anyone, more than half of the staff mentioned that they shared relevant documents with Associate Lecturers. Other staff who were shown copies of students' ILSPs included tutors, module convenors and members of Technical Services.

When asked how they communicated to students with ILSPs, emails and in-person interactions prevailed. Less common were in-class, Moodle or Teams general announcements, and online interactions with students. In cases where students reached out to staff, a similar pattern emerged: emails and in-person interactions were most common, followed by online interactions.

Survey findings: Staff satisfaction in supporting students with ILSPs and additional staff support needs

The seventh question asked staff how satisfied they have been with the discussions they had with students who have ILSPs. Of the 14 responses, 5 (35%) were somewhat satisfied, 4 (29%) were very satisfied and 2 (14%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. There were 3 (21%) responses, stating that they had not had any discussions with students who have ILSPs (see Figure 7).

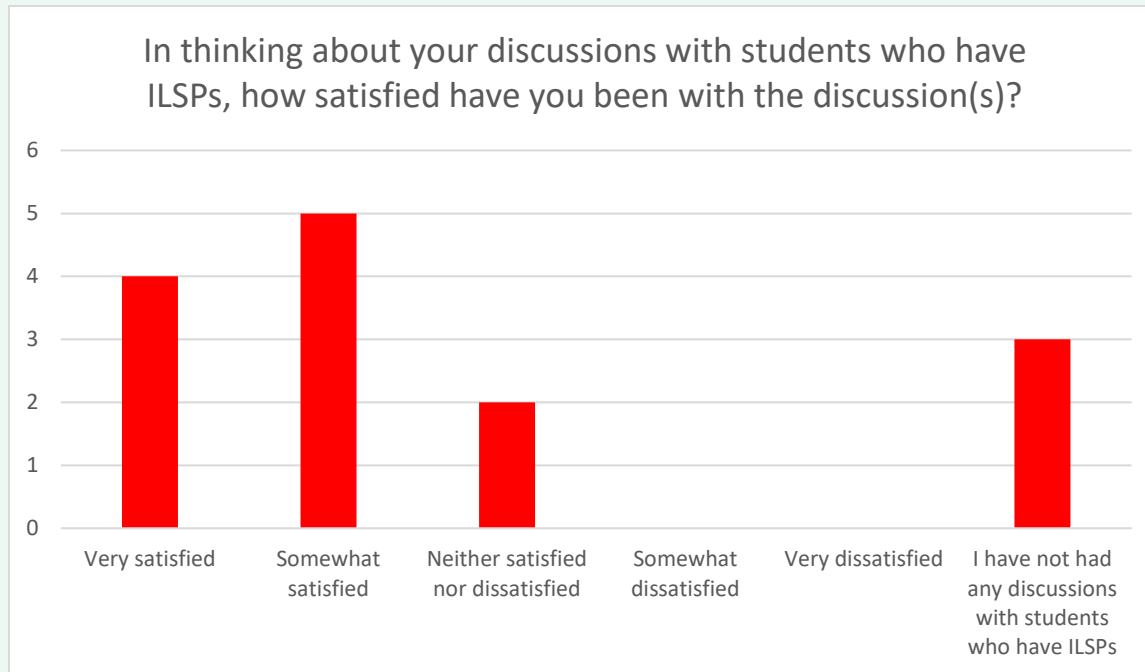


Figure 7. In thinking about your discussions with students who have ILSPs, how satisfied have you been with the discussions?

The eighth question asked staff how satisfied they were that actions have been taken to support students in your teaching as a result of discussions with students who have ILSPs. Of the 14 responses, 6 (43%) said they were somewhat satisfied, 3 (21%) were very satisfied, 2 (14%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 1 (7%) was somewhat dissatisfied. Two responses (14%) indicated that no actions were taken as a result of discussions (see Figure 8).

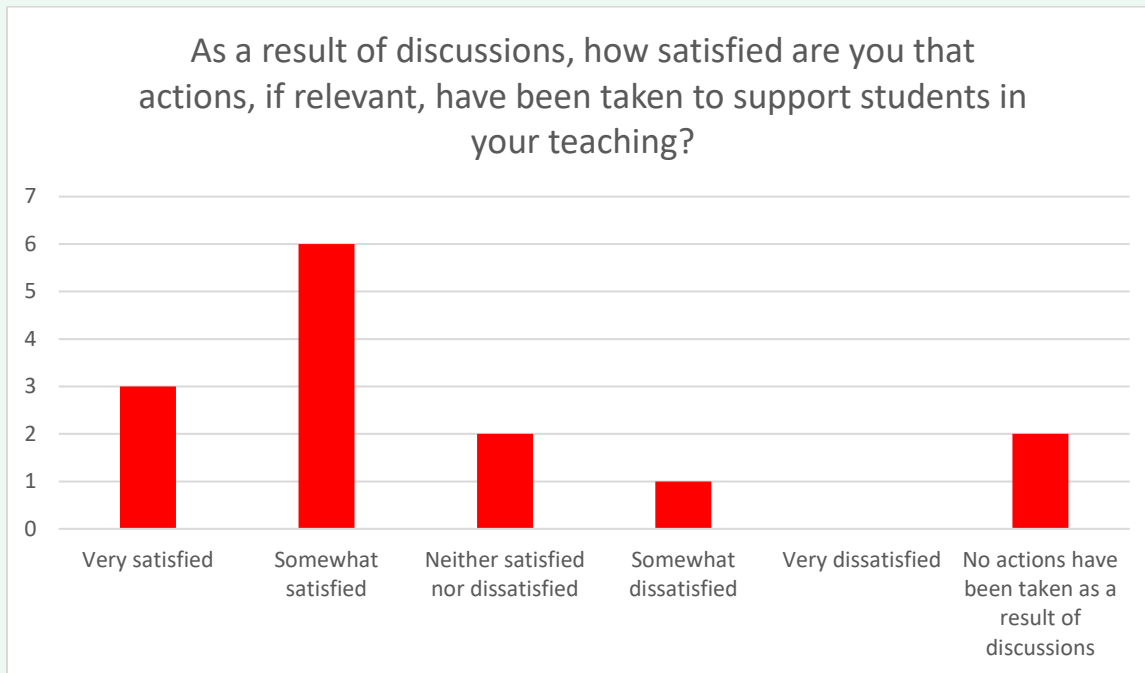


Figure 9. As a result of discussions, how satisfied are you that actions, if relevant, have been taken to support students in your teaching?

As a follow-up question, staff were invited to say what they felt could be done better to support them in relation to students with ILSPs. There were 11 responses:

Easy access to them for staff without registering each year.

Give students with ILSPs a single point of contact that is independent from module convenors - a common comment I've had is that different convenors/staff treat them quite differently, and students aren't so sure what to expect.

For modules that may involve requiring access to LICA equipment loans or specialist rooms (e.g., edit suites, design/architecture workshops), it would be useful for the relevant member/s of the technical team to have a list of students who have been given an extension. We don't necessarily need to

know the specific details of the ILSP (unless relevant), just the student name, module and date of the extension.

We need some means of ensuring that all relevant staff who have been [given] ILSPs actually read and act on the recommendations. At the moment, some staff take ILSPs very seriously while others barely read them.

Students to be more encouraged by the University Support system to reach out.

Making accessing ILSPs easier... it is not fair to rely on coordinators to update the list and LUSI is just not a quick log in to access... there is no need for overcomplicating this matter where time is important.

Some method of ensuring that every member of staff who is sent an ILSP actually reads and implements the recommendations - there are big gaps in terms of how diligent staff are.

I would like clarity as a member of the Technical team as to when I should be informed about an ILSP. I have a role in teaching and will have group work which I help facilitate, but do not have a direct 'teaching role'. Students will learn elements with regards to the interactions, but these are not taught sessions in the syllabus. This creates a grey area as I do not look for ILSPs for the students that I will be working with.

It can be difficult to keep track of ILSPs (especially when teaching large groups or getting used to a new group of students). I would appreciate being able to keep my own copies of ILSPs so that I can check regularly and remind myself.

When unexpected pressures on time and workload occur EDI for staff, and students with ILSP's, should be part of the planning process. The additional time this takes should be part of line managers' planning process. 'What impact will this have on staff supporting students with ILSPs?' 'what impact will this have on EDI for staff and students, including ILSPs?' 'Does more time need to be allocated to working with these students, and where does that come from within workload allocation?'

More central support from disabilities service - more places to refer students to for specialised support. Better ways of communicating to students their responsibilities for ILSPs.

The second, open-ended question asked staff what questions they still had about the ILSP process within LICA. There were 3 responses:

Not a question, but I think the process is not fair on the teaching staff... it is clear that if a student has received two emails about a meeting regarding their ILSPs, they chose the staff they feel most comfortable with or have prior knowledge [of], and this creates and unbalance workload for the more 'approachable teaching staff'.

I feel that the process is clear - in that if I feel that I need access to the ILSPs, I am able to gain access. There could be a greater clarity around when technicians should be informed (when students do practical work? When there is not a member of teaching staff present?). In the [current] process, I currently do not have any issues with how it operates, but I am unable to tell if I should be pursuing an ILSP for the students I work with.

I find the lack of guidance frustrating as often students have mental health-related ILSPs, but there is no guidance on how to initiate conversations and where the boundaries lie – I am not trained in mental health or any other health-related issues. I also find the system very flawed in terms of many ILSPs saying not to always expect students to be present but then we are chasing them for attendance issues, which is very time-consuming and seemingly a waste of time because they have an ILSP that states they may miss some sessions. The uni needs to work out and clearly communicate what is acceptable in terms of attendance if the ILSP says that a student might miss sessions.

A final question asked staff if they have seen, or read, a copy of the ILSP policy that is relevant to their section(s) in LICA. Of the 14 responses, 10 (71%) said yes and 4 (29%) said no.

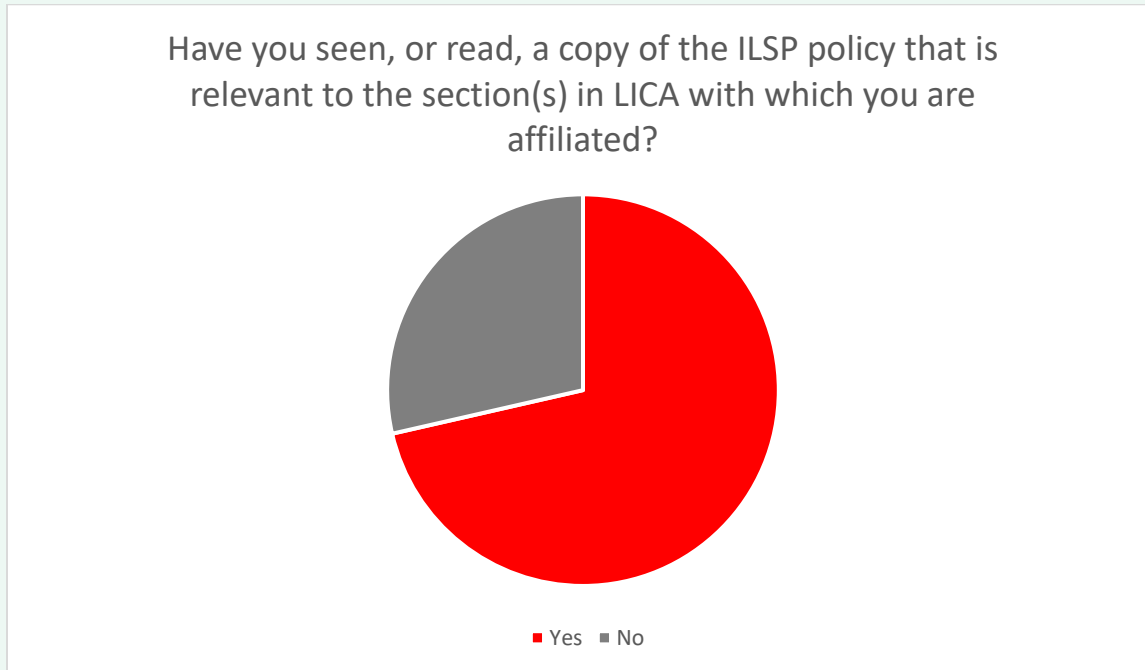


Figure 10. Have you seen, or read, a copy of the ILSP policy that is relevant to the section(s) in LICA with which you are affiliated?

In summary, staff generally were satisfied with their interactions with students who had ILSPs. This pertains both to the overall discussions and the actions that were taken, if relevant, as a result of those discussions. It should be noted that two staff indicated no actions were taken as a result of discussions; this could be due to many reasons, and could be explored in more detail in subsequent research.

Almost three-quarters of LICA staff had access to the ILSP policy/ies most relevant to their section, and had seen, or read, them. This indicates a base level of understanding of the expectations, determined by each departmental section, on how staff should engage with, and support, students with ILSPs.

Delving deeper into any further support that staff felt they needed to continue to work successfully with students who had ILSPs, comments suggested that **all staff needed to take responsibility for reading ILSPs and responding to students in a timely manner**, as there appears to be an uneven distribution of effort amongst staff. This can result in **students getting various levels of support**, depending on who they see. Spending time to support students, from reading and understanding ILSPs to meeting with students, had an

added workload implication that currently was not being considered in staff workload models.

Furthermore, some staff believed that **greater levels of support from central Disability and Inclusive Practice were needed** to support students with ILSPs, rather than relying principally on departmental resources. Having **easier access to ILSPs** also would be helpful, which could be done by **keeping personal copies of ILSPs** and **not having to ask Administrative Services staff** for ILSPs. Moreover, there were some staff who mentioned that **students could be more empowered to reach out to staff** when wishing to discuss their ILSPs.

Specifically for **Technical Services members of staff, more clarity was needed around when they should be informed about students with ILSPs**. In instances where students needed certain resources (e.g., access to editing suites), **Technical staff also would appreciate being told about extensions** for students with ILSPs; staff do not need to know details of the ILSPs.

When asked what further support was needed for LICA staff, there was mention of a **clearer understanding of the ILSP process, especially for Technical Services members of staff**, to know when and how they could offer support to students. Moreover, **having guidance for staff on starting conversations with students who have ILSPs and mental health issues** would be useful, as would a **better understanding of when additional support should be accessed** (e.g., when to speak with someone in Disability and Inclusive Practice Service).

Demographics

Two demographic questions were asked of staff: subject area within LICA and category of teaching staff.

Of the 14 responses received about the subject area within LICA that staff belong to, 1 (7%) was from Architecture, 3 (21%) were from Design, 9 (21%) were from Film, 3 (21%) were from Fine Art, 2 (14%) were from Theatre and 2 (14%) were members of Technical Services (see Figure 11).

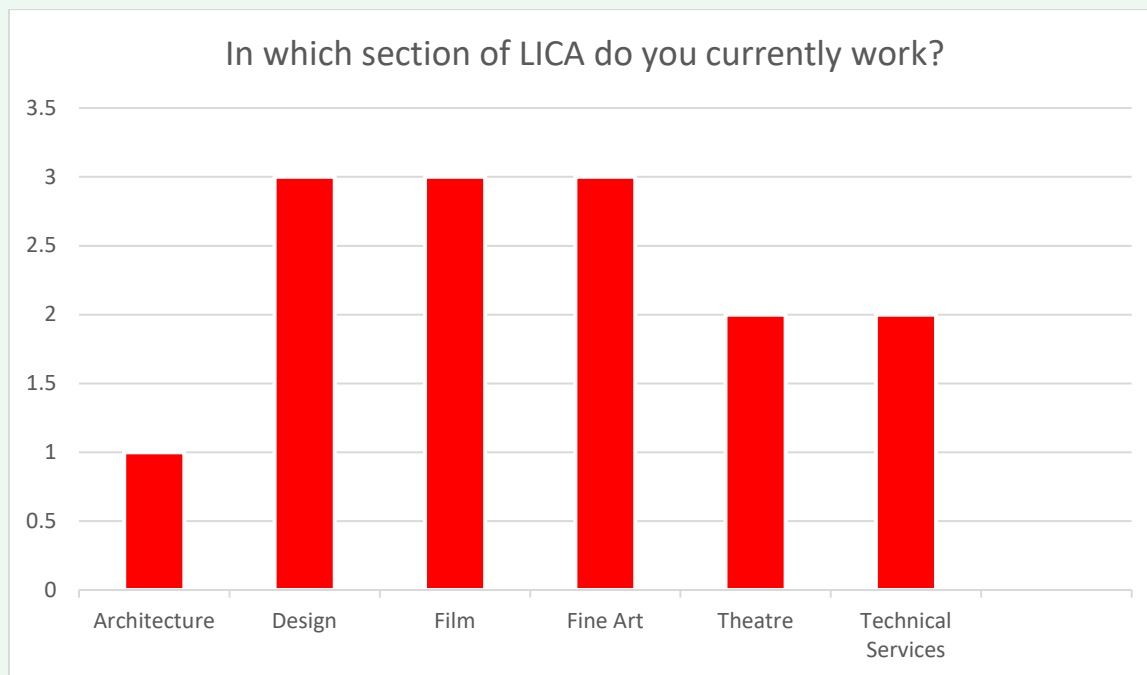


Figure 11. In which section of LICA do you currently work?

In terms of the category of teaching staff, the 14 responses revealed that 12 (86%) were Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Professors and Teaching Fellows and 2 (14%) were members of Technical Services staff; none were Associate Lecturers (see Figure 12).

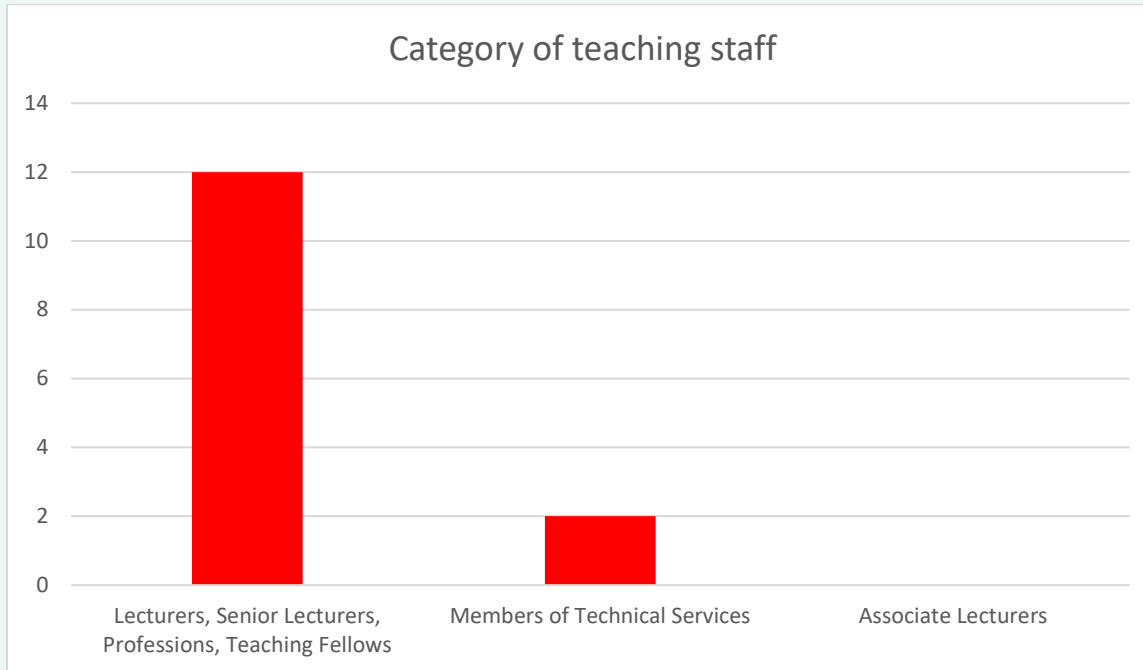


Figure 12. Category of teaching staff.

In summary, respondents were fairly evenly spread amongst the five sections within LICA and included members of Technical Services. Most of the respondents were those directly lecturing to students (e.g., as opposed to demonstrating).

Focus group with Administrative Services staff

As mentioned in the Introduction, a focus group was held with members of the LICA Administrative Services team to better understand how they managed ILSPs within the department and what concerns or challenges they had in relation to the new LICA ILSP policies.

The LICA Administrative Services team first were asked **when they sent ILSPs to staff involved in teaching** over the 2023/24 academic year. Everyone said that they sent ILSPs in **Term 1**, with some **also sending ILSPs in Terms 2 and 3**; **sending ILSPs in Term 3 was rare**, however. Should any changes to a student's ILSP occur during the year, the team said they would be notified of the change and then they would let relevant staff involved in teaching know.

In terms of **the process for accessing ILSPs** to pass them on to staff involved in teaching, Administrative Services staff mentioned a recent change. At the beginning of the 2023/24

academic year, the team would download a copy of the ILSP from LUSI Desktop and share it with module convenors via OneDrive. They then were informed that ILSP data had to be accessed via LUSI Online because the latter always showed live data. As university staff cannot download information from LUSI online, the team initially were taking screenshots of the data to pass on to staff involved in teaching. Now, the **Administrative Services team supply staff involved in teaching with URLs for ILSPs**; in the case of Part I and Postgraduate teaching, staff involved in teaching have ILSPs in folders, which are accessed over OneDrive.

When asked **who, specifically, the Administrative Services team gave URLs to access ILSPs to**, they said **module convenors only**. Other staff involved in teaching, including Technical Services staff and Associate Lecturers, were not given access to URLs by the team because it was not always clear who was teaching on each module. **The assumption, in these cases, was that module convenors were passing on, or showing, ILSPs to other, relevant staff involved in their modules**. In cases where an external person was teaching on a module, the onus was on the module convenor to show the ILSP to them; that is, Administrative Services would not send a URL for an ILSP to an external person.

Regarding **how often students reached out to the Administrative Services team for ILSP support**, the answer was **rarely**. When students did, it was because PowerPoint presentations were not made available before lectures, they were hoping for extensions or alternative assessments (even if they did not have an ILSP) or, in one case, they had not published their ILSP so was not aware that they could ask for an extension to an assessment.

In thinking about the **current challenges facing the Administrative Services team in supporting students with ILSPs and staff involved in teaching**, one, big issue was **interpreting the plan**, itself. As part of this, it was felt that the **'reasonable adjustments' being offered to students were too vague** and could use further clarification. Another issue was the **perception of fairness**: the Administrative Services team believed that no, one student should be seen to be getting preferential treatment with their ILSP in relation to 'reasonable adjustments'. Moreover, there was a sense that **some students were not always happy with having to speak with each module convenor about their ILSPs**; the Administrative Services team wondered whether other processes for supporting students that did not involve multiple conversations could be considered.

Related to current challenges, the Administrative Services team suggested that they would welcome **support** in the following ways: (1) **not having to send URLs from LUSI Online for module convenors** and asking them to use LUSI Online; (2) **providing training sessions for staff involved in teaching who need support**; (3) **establishing a named contact in Disability**

and Inclusive Practice so that information flow could be easier (e.g., obtaining an anticipated list of students with ILSPs before the start of each academic year).

In summary, the Administrative Services team most often ILSP links (via URLs) to module convenors in Term 1 and, sometimes, in Terms 2 and 3. The process for sending ILSPs was somewhat cumbersome, involving the team obtaining URLs for each students' ILSP, putting the URLs onto OneDrive folders and sending links for those folders to module convenors. No, other staff involved in teaching received URLs from the team; rather, the expectation was that module convenors would share this information with them.

Current challenges faced by the Administrative Support team include being able to interpret the plans, especially in relation to interpreting the options available to make 'reasonable adjustments' and creating a sense of fairness among how students with ILSPs are treated. To help with these challenges, the team suggested that module convenors should be able to look at ILSPs from LUSI Online, themselves; that training could be provided for staff who do not know how to use LUSI Online, and; that having a named contact in Disability and Inclusive Practice could help with information about ILSPs to flow better between the departments.

Conclusions

This report aimed to collate the findings from a survey and a focus group that was used to evaluate the adoption of subject-specific ILSP policies within LICA by staff. The policies were introduced at the beginning of the 2023/24 academic year, and the survey was given to LICA staff in May 2024 and the focus group undertaken in July 2024 (LICA students were given a different survey).

Survey findings revealed that staff communication with students who had ILSPs occurred mainly during Term 1 and then tapered off, for various reasons, in subsequent terms. This finding is echoed in the focus group with the Administrative Services team, who said that most ILSPs were sent to module convenors in Term 1 via URLs. However, this finding contrasts with students' experiences, as they stated that discussions took place unevenly across the three terms, with slightly more happening in Term 2 (see **ILSP student survey report 2023-24**). Connected to this finding is the number of students with ILSPs who had been contacted: while a majority of staff in this survey stated that they had communicated with students across the three academic terms, students said that almost half of them had not been contacted in this academic year (see **ILSP student survey report 2023-24**). Thus, there is a disparity between staff and student perceptions that could be further explored.

In terms of how staff received details about ILSPs, the most popular way was through members of Administrative Services sending documents to them. These documents then were shared by teaching staff with other, relevant staff, including Associate Lecturers,

tutors, module convenors and members of Technical Services. When speaking with students who had ILSPs, staff tended to use emails and had in-person interactions; this same pattern of communication existed for students who reached out to staff. Generally, staff were satisfied with their interactions with students, both in terms of discussions about ILSPs and actions taken to support students. These findings mirror what students said when thinking about their interactions with staff about their ILSPs (see **ILSP student survey report 2023-24**). Although these findings point to positive experiences with sharing information and interacting with students, Administrative Services say that it takes a lot of their time to compile and distribute ILSPs, via URLs on OneDrive, to module convenors. Particularly as most teaching staff can access their own students' ILSPs on LUSI Online, there may be an opportunity for staff to do this in future, a possibility that the Administrative Services team identified in the focus group.

Finally, it was acknowledged by some staff that students with ILSPs were getting various levels of support within LICA, and that all staff needed to be proactive about, and proficient in, supporting students. When the latter was not happening, a minority of staff bore the responsibility of providing additional support, which was not recognised in workload models. Having greater clarity about the ILSP process, more/better guidance from relevant university central teams (e.g., Disability and Inclusive Practice) on the interpretation of 'reasonable adjustments' and the ILSP document, itself, and getting support with having difficult conversations with students might help to mitigate some of the issues described above. This includes alerting members of Technical Services when they should be informed about students with ILSPs and when staff, in general, should access external support.

Given these findings, there are some actions that LICA could take to improve the experiences of staff who are supporting students with ILSPs:

1. **Encourage teaching staff to access students' ILSPs via LUSI Online.** Rather than use Administrative Services staff time to obtain and send all ILSPs to relevant staff members, LICA staff should be encouraged to access LUSI. One way to do this would be for LUSI staff to provide an easy-to-understand guide that could be emailed to all staff before the start of each term. Another option is to see if any training guides or videos already have been made and provide them for staff who find it difficult to access LUSI Online. A third option would be to understand if the automated email, currently sent to Teaching Coordinators only, also could be sent to module convenors and Technical Services staff.
2. **Recording ILSP interactions.** Make a regular record of staff interactions with students who have ILSPs – include staff type and term – to ensure that students are being given the opportunity to discuss their ILSPs. For example, each subject Director of Study could make a record once a month to follow progress. Another

option would be to speak with LUSI to see if the notes section of ILSPs could be accessed by module convenors to record their interactions with students.

3. **Develop and share a clear process among all staff.** Consider how all staff involved with teaching can be made aware of students with ILSPs, and how and when these staff might contact students. Creating a clear process that shows what happens at the university and departmental levels, including where to access external support, would be helpful. A good, first step would be to establish a contact at Disability and Inclusive Practice who could act as an 'inside source' for the department.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the LICA staff who took the time to complete the survey and offer their experiences of ILSPs with the LICA EDI Committee. Thank you also to the LICA Administrative Services team who took part in the focus group. Together, their insights should hopefully create further improvements to our ILSP policies in future.