Introduction

Information literacy is required at all levels of learning, teaching and research and is a collection of skills/competencies that develop through education into the world of work. They are lifelong learning skills which are valued in both the education sphere and within employment. We enable students and staff to become independent learners as they develop these skills.

Library services aims with this policy to implement the below:

- Every campus based students to have information literacy embedded in to their curriculum at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 7.
- All campus based students, who need to complete a dissertation/project, to be provided with information literacy embedded in to their curriculum at level 5 or 6.
- Research students offered an induction at the beginning of their research studies and follow up guidance.
- Academic staff offered 1-2-1 meetings and workshops to enhance their information literacy skills which will be supplemented with regular communication about other opportunities to keep abreast in this area.
- All support/professional staff in the university to have the opportunity to develop their information literacy skills and be able to book 1-2-1 meetings with the Academic Support Assistant librarians and attend workshops.

This policy will explore more what is meant by information literacy, how this is relevant to UWL and how we plan to continue to embed the skills into the curriculum and beyond

Information Literacy Policy
Information literacy definition

UWL is committed to developing information literacy in our students and staff, whatever their role.

Information literacy is a key attribute in effective teaching and learning, research, workplace functionality, and empowered citizenship (Bruce, 2008; Forster, 2015; Coonan et al., 2018) and maps to all of the university’s Graduate Attributes (UWL, 2015).

The information literate person is able to negotiate the digital, documentary and nondocumentary information landscapes relevant to the different aspects of their lives.

UWL’s Information Literacy definition:

The information literate person identifies knowledge gaps, can find, appraise and make balanced judgements about information, and curate and use it in an ethical and inclusive manner to attain increased understanding, competency, expertise, autonomy, and creativity.

Accompanying descriptors:

Learning

Information literate learners have the skills and tools to obtain an effective grasp of the subject, gaining confidence and understanding. They contribute to their own and others’ knowledge and understanding, and develop the characteristics of self-directed and self-determined learners.

Teaching

Information literate teachers are highly aware of contemporary issues and knowledge in their area of expertise and therefore are better able to develop challenging, skilled and creative teaching. Their teaching practice recognises the need for, and supports, the explicit development of information literacy in their students’ learning.

Research

Information literate researchers are more fully engaged with current knowledge and so can effectively recognise the direction of future research and how, and in what context, they might make an impactful contribution.

In the workplace

The information literate person has a greater ability to develop contextual knowledge to fulfil a range of roles in the workplace, including informing and supporting others, fulfilling key aims, and developing strategy (Cheuk, 2017; Forster, 2017).

As a citizen

Information literate citizens can critically judge information and its sources to make ethically and socially-aware decisions that enable them to engage fully in democratic life and society (Coonan et al., 2018)

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Our students can critically judge information and its sources to make ethically and socially-aware decisions that enable them to engage fully in democratic life and society (Coonan et al., 2018).

Information literate researchers are more aware of and so more accurately engaged with, current knowledge.

Such engagement can effectively recognise the direction of future research and how, and in what context, they might make an impactful contribution.

Impactful contributions lead to effective skills and career development.

Information literate teachers are more likely to be aware of contemporary issues and knowledge in their area of expertise.

With greater professional awareness, information literate teachers are better able to develop challenging, skilled and creative teaching.

Their teaching practice recognises the need for, and supports, the explicit development of information literacy in their students’ learning.

Information Literate employees understand copyright and data protection law and store and curate information ethically, legally and efficiently.

Information literate researchers are more aware of contemporary issues and knowledge in their area of expertise and therefore are better able to seek out impactful ways of developing their teaching.
The UWL definition complements other national definitions:

CILIP: The Library and Information Association:
“Information literacy is the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use. It empowers us as citizens to develop informed views and to engage fully with society.” (Coonan, E. et al., 2018)

Association of College and Research Libraries (2016) have adopted a framework which has six core concepts:

- “Authority Is Constructed and Contextual”
- “Information Creation as a Process”
- “Information Has Value”
- “Research as Inquiry”
- “Scholarship as Conversation”
- “Searching as Strategic Exploration”

Students and staff face an ever increasing amount of information both in their disciplines and the wider world. Information Literacy teaching gives them the skills to navigate this information, evaluate it, build upon it and then go onto generate their own ideas and creative outputs. The skills are also of increasing importance when we consider the growing development of ‘fake news’ and the increased reliance education, government and society place on making the online source the definitive source.

The term Information literacy is often found alongside Digital literacy or under the umbrella term of metaliteracy. Although information and digital literacy are complementary to each other, both have additional elements to them. Information literacy is not limited to only engaging with digital material and Digital literacy (Jisc, 2015) covers wider elements of the digital world including IT skills and digital identity. Both skills sets contain a number of the same skills and work very much in partnership with each other.

Information Literacy Policy
UWL Graduate Attributes

Information literacy complements and contributes to all the UWL Graduate Attributes but it is most notably connected to the below 5:

- Knowledgeable and confident, our graduates are self-aware; understanding the need for ethical action and considering how they impact others.
- They are creative, able to communicate ideas effectively, finding solutions to problems and influencing change.
- Possessing strong Information literacy, our graduates can explain, interpret, analyse, evaluate and draw inferences from a range of sources.
- Wanting to positively change their worlds, they are committed to equality and inclusivity, personal and professional development and supporting the development of others.
- Embracing change, they are courageous and understand how committing to learning, and developing the requisite skills, allows them to face challenges in highly interconnected, rapidly changing, national and international, environments.

Working alongside colleagues, Library Services through our information literacy teaching, is able to contribute to UWL student’s development and growth in the above areas.

UWL characteristics

In order for Information Literacy skills training to be effective, there needs to be a recognition of a person’s current competencies and the context they are working in (level, subject etc). As a career university we also need to make sure that the skills are shown as relevant to both study and employment. UWL has a wonderfully diverse student and staff population which means that when students start their course or members of staff join the university, they may have very differing information literacy skills sets. The wide range of different subjects taught and researched at the university also means that staff and students will require different information sources, evaluation techniques and plans. Our implementation of this information literacy policy will ensure that these factors form part of our planning and delivery.

Key Drivers

This policy responds to the needs set out in the UWL Learning, teaching and Assessment Strategy (UWL, 2014a):

- Developing creativity in our students and building on a firm foundation of core and discipline skills.
- We will require all disciplines to nurture and develop their strengths in and culture of research and scholarship
- We will focus intensely on the graduate-level employment of our students, ensuring they develop the graduate-level skills required for their future success.

Information Literacy is a core skill that gives students the opportunity to understand their discipline and build on the work of others to develop new and creative ideas. It enables staff to optimise their ability to access and evaluate knowledge of their discipline and bring this research into their teaching. It is a core skill that employers look for in our graduates.

It also responds to the UWL Employability statement (2016) “Throughout their course, students are encouraged to plan their career by developing employability skills.” As noted earlier, information literacy is a core skill for employability.

Information Literacy Policy
Library Services see information literacy as part of the University’s drive to increase engagement and retention of students. Information literacy skills contribute to the student engaging with their subject knowledge, aid in their understanding and help to increase student’s confidence.

Increased Information Literacy competencies across staff and students we see as contributing positively to the teaching quality and the learning environment components of TEF. Although Information Literacy may not be explicitly mentioned in our TEF submission, the skills form part of different areas/metrics.

The policy also responds to the UWL (2014b) Research and Scholarship Strategy 2014 – 2018.

- Engage all staff in scholarship and dissemination of knowledge, and develop their potential as leaders in teaching and learning through building capacity in pedagogical research and scholarship.

As noted earlier, Information literacy skills are core in enabling staff and research students to conduct successful research across all disciplines. The ACRL framework (2016) ‘Research as Inquiry’ and ‘Scholarship as Conversation’ are particularly relevant here.

Information Literacy is an important tenet in many international policy documents on lifelong learning, including the Prague Declaration - "Towards an Information Literate Society" (UNESCO, 2003).

The policy also responds to the information literacy requirements of professional accrediting societies, for example the Bar Standards Board (2012), Nursing and Midwifery Council (2015), British Psychological Society (2016) and the BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT (2015).

Objectives of the policy

It is important that all students and staff have the same opportunities to develop information literacy skills. The methods used to do this will be tailored to each subject area and level but the policy aims to ensure equality for all.

Information literacy is a collaboration between librarians and academic staff who each bring unique knowledge and experience. Members of the library team have researched and published on information literacy and its role in professional education and practice, and the team provide knowledge of information’s nature and use and how to access and evaluate information sources, synthesise content and critically read. Academic staff are able to provide that deep subject knowledge and the context needed to make sure that the information literacy skills are tailored correctly for students’ academic and future professional needs.

Students and staff learn these skills best when they are embedded into their classes/processes and not seen as bolt on activities happening without context. The generic skills can be understood and applied best when taught in a subject discipline.

Objective One

Campus based students will be provided with information literacy embedded in to their curriculum at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Objective Two

Campus based students, who need to complete a dissertation/project, will be provided with information literacy embedded in to their curriculum at level 5 or 6.
Objective Three
Research students will be offered an induction at the beginning of their research studies and follow up guidance.

Objective Four
Academic staff will be offered 1-2-1 meetings and workshops to enhance their information literacy skills which will be supplemented with regular communication about other opportunities to keep abreast in this area.

Objective Five
All support/professional staff in the university will have the opportunity to develop their information literacy skills and be able to book 1-2-1 meetings with the Academic Support Assistant librarians and attend workshops.

Monitoring the success of this policy
The success of this policy will be demonstrated by an increase in the quality and appropriate use of information sources used by students in their academic work demonstrating their skills in sourcing, evaluating and critically reading sources. We will monitor this by:

- Examining a snapshot of student’s work at each level to evaluate the use of quality sources in the work
- Using survey tools, for example Poll Everywhere, within the class to:
  - Evaluate the immediate impact of the information literacy class
  - Continue this process throughout their studies to monitor the impact

The success will also be shown by an increase in the equality of students and staff being taught in information literacy skills.

Library Services Information Literacy group will report to the Library Management Team each semester to record progress in the implementation of the policy. The group will also update the team on best practice around Information Literacy and recommendations for future developments.

Annually, the Library will report to the university on progress against our KPIs which includes a KPI on Information Literacy (Objective 1 of this policy).

In addition, an annual report will be produced and presented to relevant committees about the implementation of the policy and future developments.

As teaching and learning approaches change, Academic Support Librarians will amend their teaching of information literacy to ensure they are following best practice. These changes will be in consultation with their academic and librarian colleagues, both at UWL and in the wider profession.

Implementation
Library Services will implement this Information Literacy policy through the following methods, all of which will take into consideration different starting points and preferences:

- Induction

  All new campus based students will be offered an induction to the library. Where appropriate, these will also be offered to students studying at our partner institutions’. In addition, all new
academic members of staff will be offered an induction meeting with their Academic Support Librarian and all new members of staff will be provided with information about the library as part of the University Induction.

- **Embedded classes in modules**

  The Academic Support Librarian will work with the module leader to ensure that the embedded information literacy classes in modules will be timed to ensure that they are relevant to the work that the students are completing and focused on their needs. These classes will take place in the scheduled timetable either in the lecture or workshop/studio/tutorial slot. Where possible, multiple classes will be held in the module and assignments will be created.

- **New Courses**

  At the development stage of a new course, the Academic Support Librarian will work with the Course team to ensure that Information Literacy skills are embedded into the course at the relevant levels.

- **UWL CPD programme**

  The Academic Support team offer workshops and training through the [UWL Continuous Professional Development programme](#) for all staff. These workshops cover all aspects of Information Literacy and at various points will be themed to a specific development need of the UWL population.

- **Online tutorials and guides**

  These will be available via the library website and/or embedded into the VLE to offer students additional ways of accessing information literacy training. They will also allow students to further review material which has been covered in a class. When appropriate, these will be used to offer assessed pieces of work as part of a module. Guides will also be available to help research staff and students.

- **LinkedIn Learning**

  Where available, we will promote to staff and students relevant learning and development videos available via [LinkedIn Learning](#).

- **Additional drop in workshops**

  Optional workshops will be advertised to all staff and students to provide additional training on information literacy.

- **1-2-1 appointments**

  All staff and students can book an appointment with their Academic Support Librarian/Assistant Librarian to have additional support.

- **Liaison with academic staff**

  Academic Support Librarians will constantly liaise with academic staff to keep them up to date with new developments both for their own work and their students.

- **Alumni**
Alumni, with a valid Alumni card, can borrow up to three books on three week loan. They can also book an appointment with a member of the Academic Support team for assistance in location of relevant available information.

Skills at each level
Information Literacy is a lifelong skill and is developed at different stages. Each stage builds on the understanding achieved at the previous stage. In recognition of this, below are the skills which will be developed at the different levels of study/research. The headings used are inspired by the SCONUL ‘Seven Pillars’ (SCONUL, 2011):

Levels 2, 3 and 4
How to use the library and its resources (covered at induction)
- Awareness of library policies
- Knowing key library contacts and how to contact them
- How to locate and use library services and resources

Recognize and define the information need
- Recognising different sources of information
- Identifying what the assignment requires them to do
- Ability to identify gaps in their knowledge of the subject

Construct strategies for locating information
- Understanding the difference between broad and narrow searches
- Locating known items vs subject searching
- Knowing who to contact to ask for assistance

Ability to locate and access information
- Ability to locate and use their online reading list
- Ability to search the library catalogue effectively
- Ability to find the physical and online resources

Ability to evaluate information
- Ability to understand the value and significance of different information sources
- Knowledge of the difference between a library discovery system and a web search engine
- Begin to know how to evaluate the credibility of various sources

Ability to organise and apply information
- Begin to know how to critically appraise an information source
- Ability to find and apply the correct referencing style
- Understand what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it

Commercial awareness/employability
- Find basic professional information

Information Literacy Policy
Level 5

Recognize and define the information need

- Ability to identify sources that best suit the information need and begin to demonstrate independence in accessing and searching e-resources
- Ability to identify appropriate keywords and justify their inclusion

Construct strategies for locating information

- Ability to alter keywords and search methods as appropriate to the particular e-resource
- Begin to show evidence of clear strategies when searching
- Begin to demonstrate basic understanding of advanced search strategies for specific databases

Ability to locate and access information

- Ability to search the library discovery system effectively to find known items as well as items on a topic area
- Ability to select and retrieve the most relevant sources from a list of results
- Demonstrate confidence with methods of accessing scholarly information
- Understand the impact of spelling variations e.g. differences between American/British English and plurals

Ability to evaluate information

- Ability to differentiate between ‘popular’ and ‘scholarly’ sources and begin to evaluate sources in the context of currency, relevancy, authority and purpose.
- Ability to justify the relevance of a particular source
- Begin to develop a critical reading style

Ability to organise and apply information

- Ability to reference accurately, in accordance with the departmental style
- Begin to understand links between information sources

Commercial awareness/employability

- Ability to utilise a variety of different sources including e-resources, company webpages and social media to conduct basic research about an organisation and/or sector trends
- Ability to demonstrate reflection on own experience and be able to relate these experiences to a professional setting
Levels 6 and 7

Recognize and define the information need

- Ability to identify information requirements for coursework, the level of information required, and the types of material needed
- Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
- Ability to identify appropriate keywords (broader and narrower terms, synonyms)

Construct strategies for locating information

- Select from a wide range of appropriate sources to search for information, e.g. identify relevant databases relating to their topic; effectively use the discovery tool
- Ability to combine keywords to formulate a search, using broader and narrower terms, truncation, synonyms, apply limits
- Ability to use ‘advanced search’ options in databases
- Awareness of controlled vocabulary and when to use it
- Ability to use advanced searching skills to find credible web sources, including Google Scholar

Ability to locate and access information

- Access relevant Library resources (books, relevant individual databases)
- Source information beyond the Library (ILL, SCONUL, open access material)
- Save results of database searches (My Account options), and re-use searches (adjusted as appropriate) in multiple databases

Ability to evaluate information

- Evaluate whether content is relevant to coursework
- Ability to critically evaluate material found for academic integrity, bias, validity and currency
- Critically evaluate the quality of websites found
- Differentiate between peer-reviewed and popular literature, and understand the potential audience for both
- Ability to select relevant results from a search, and then use these to develop/extend search strategies (e.g., subject terms, citation searching)
- Reflect on the research process, assess whether the information need has been met and redefine/revisit if necessary to locate more relevant material
- Develop further a critical reading style and apply this to all sources

Ability to organise and apply information

- Mark and download references for use in their work
- Record, save and re-use search strategies and sources used
- Accurately reference sources in the accepted departmental style
- Awareness of RefWorks (reference management software)

Commercial awareness/employability

- Carry out background research into sector and/or specific organisations when preparing for job interviews
- Identify relevant trade publications, company data and professional publications to research and be aware of sector developments
- Ability to use social networks to stay up-to-date on sector and company news

Information Literacy Policy
Recognize and define the information need

- Ability to define the research problem in terms of literature domains and foci

Construct strategies for locating information

- Indicate and understand which databases, depositories and grey literature and other sources must be consulted
- Run relevant scoping searches to identify key parameters
- Use PICO, SPICE or other means of deconstructing the research topic into search terms
- Use logic terms to construct focused and comprehensive search expressions

Ability to locate and access information

- Identify sources of full-text research studies and other documentation
- Locate full-text studies based on citation details
- Know how to make applications via the university’s inter-library-loan service

Ability to evaluate information

- Assess value and appropriateness of database search results
- Apply a range of critical appraisal skills to research studies and reports
- Appreciate linkages of significance between different research studies

Ability to organise and apply information

- Appropriate use of RefWorks or other reference collating and managing software

Commercial awareness/employability

- Understand the commercial value of research
- Be aware of funding sources
- Understand and apply the professional value of information literacy
Recognize and define the information need

- Ability to define the information need

Construct strategies for location information

- Understand the range of possible sources/formats that information could be discovered in
- Ability to combine keywords to formulate a search, using broader and narrower terms, truncation, synonyms, apply limits
- Awareness of professional/layman language

Ability to locate and access information

- Identify most relevant discovery platform to source the required sources/formats
- Locate full-text source based on citation details
- Know how to make applications via the university’s inter-library-loan service

Ability to evaluate information

- Apply a range of critical appraisal skills to studies and reports
- Appreciate linkages of significance between different sources of information
- Differentiate between peer-reviewed and popular literature, and understand the potential audience for both
- Reflect on the search process, assess whether the information need has been met and redefine/revisit if necessary to locate more relevant material

Ability to organise and apply information

- Mark and download references
- Record, save and re-use search strategies and sources used
- Accurately reference sources in the accepted style
- Awareness of RefWorks (reference management software)

Commercial awareness/employability

- Understand and apply the professional value of information literacy
- Follow appropriate ethical, legal and security guidelines
References


Information Literacy Policy


UWL (2015) *UWL Graduate attributes.* Available at: [https://campuspress.uwl.ac.uk/teaching/how-to/curriculum-design/uwl-graduate-attributes/](https://campuspress.uwl.ac.uk/teaching/how-to/curriculum-design/uwl-graduate-attributes/) (Accessed: 27 October 2018)
