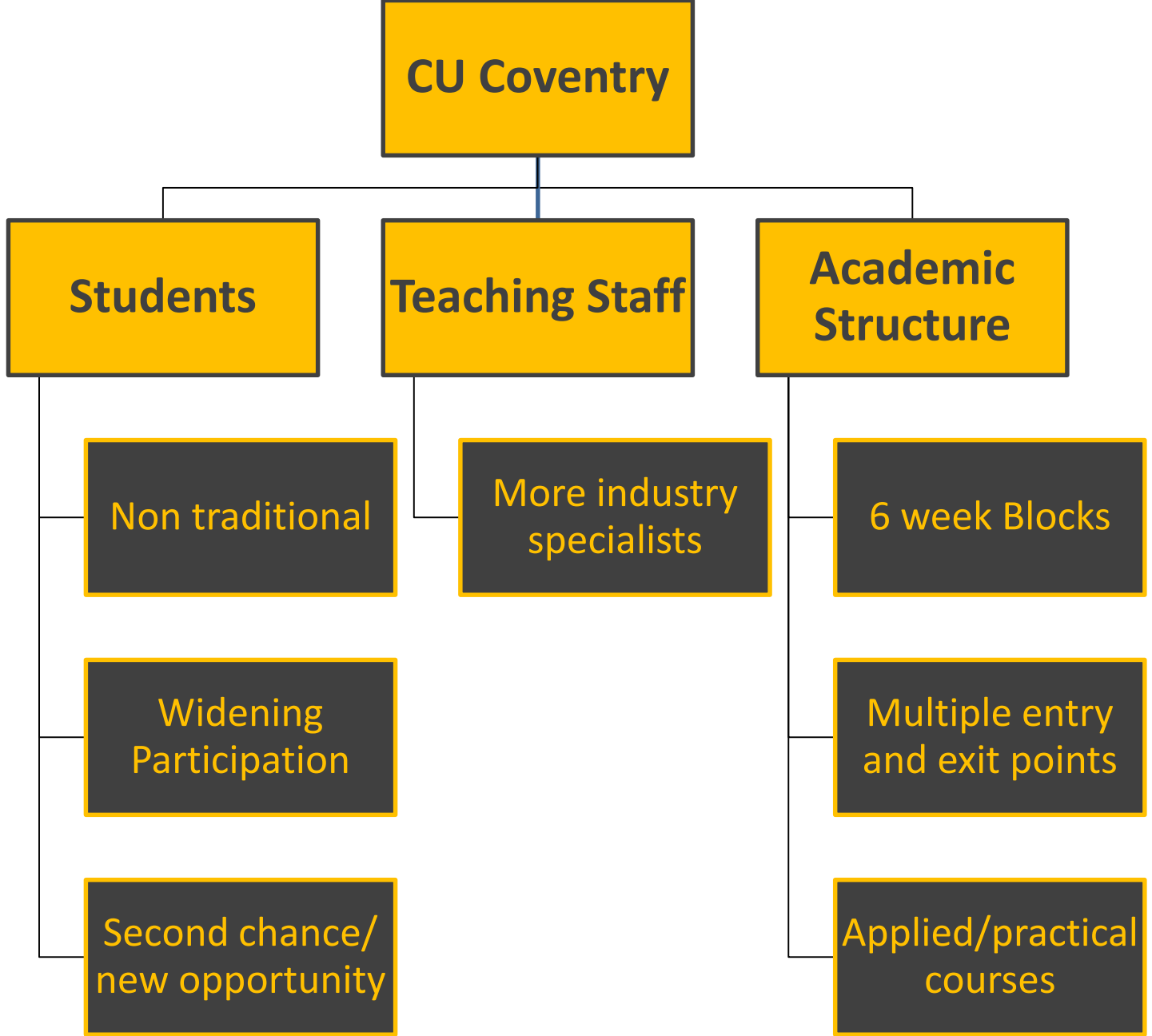# Outline

1. Introduce CU Coventry and the Academic Writing Service's (AWS) role and place within it

2. Discuss the project rationale and aims

3. Present and discuss some of the project findings

4. Discuss the outputs and outcomes from the research

5. Outline some possible next steps, both for the research and the AWS

CU Coventry

Students
- Non traditional
- Widening Participation
- Second chance/ new opportunity

Teaching Staff
- More industry specialists

Academic Structure
- 6 week Blocks
- Multiple entry and exit points
- Applied/practical courses

Academic Writing Service

- EAP/academic writing support provision

- Work with students and teaching staff

- But often viewed as a service that deals only with student problems

- **We feel that this approach is not getting the best of out of our skill set or benefitting students and staff in the ways that are needed**

The Project: Rationale

- The Year 3 **final project** is an assignment all students do across all subject areas at CU Coventry

- Predominantly literature or desk based research

- Every year, students encounter issues with this genre (Todd, Smith and Bannister 2006)

- These issues impact on the support we provide

We investigated the views and expectations of teachers in relation to the undergraduate final year project

The Project: Influences

- Influenced by genre research and literacy in the discipline based projects:

  o Lughmani, Gardner, Chen, Wong and Chan (2016)
  o Wingate and Tribble (2012)
  o Gardner (2016)
  o Nathan (2013)
  o Nesi and Gardner (2012)
  o Parkinson (2017)

The Project: Aims

1. To gain a clearer picture of teachers' expectations and views of the final project within each subject area

2. To be able to provide more subject aligned and relevant advice and guidance to students

3. To produce research informed teaching and learning resources around writing this specific assignment

4. To transform the perceptions of the Academic Writing Service at an institutional level

Methodology

- Teachers and/or supervisors in 9 subject areas surveyed

- A bespoke 19 item questionnaire was used

- Open and closed questions

- Quantitative and qualitative data gathered

- 14 out of 30 completed the questionnaire

- Interpretive analysis of open responses (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2007)

Findings and Discussion

50% stated that the results section is mandatory

Differences **within 4 out of 9 subjects** on mandatory sections in the final project

Final project is labelled as:
6 = **Dissertation**
7 = **Project**
1 = **Investigative report**

Different label within Biochemical Sciences (**Dissertation** and **Project**)

57% of respondents reported that they felt students found writing the methodology **difficult**

But 50% said students find it **easy** or **very easy** to distinguish between primary and secondary research

Findings and Discussion

"*The methodology is often a **new concept** as that is **not reflected in the students study in YR1 - Yr 2**. It is an element which **applies only to dissertations**.*"

Methodology: Law

"*This is a form of research which students are **already accustomed to** throughout their academic life at the University*"

Methodology: Law

"outline **gaps**"
"aim to fill **gaps**"
"*identify the **gap** to be filled by your research**"*

Lit Review

Findings and Discussion

The responses provided enough information for use in the creation of final project writing guides that are relevant to most subject areas

The results and the actual research are allowing us to provide more subject aligned advice, resources and sessions

Academic Writing Service

Final Projects: Writing a Methodology in Desk Based Research

What is a Methodology and what does it do?

One of the main purposes of the final project is to develop student's independent research skills (Nesi and Gardner 2012). A part of meeting this purpose is to provide a detailed outline of the research methodology used in the project. This is the case for both desk based and primary research.

The Methodology section is a careful, step by step description of the methods employed in your research. It should be written in a clear enough way so that the reader understands what you did and why and is able to replicate the research at a later date if they want.

This is best summed up by Coventry University's Centre for Academic Writing (CAW n.d.):

"The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the specific methods your project used to answer the research question/objectives. Therefore, this chapter is not a general/theoretical discussion of research methodology."

The last point is important to note: you are informing the reader about what you did and why, not telling them about research methodologies generally.

The methodology chosen should correspond to the aims and objectives of the research; this is because it is the best or the most convenient way to find this information out. Make this clear when writing this section (Peacock 2011).

What information should be included in the Methodology?

It is important to note that the information required in this section will depend on the subject area and the type of research being conducted, so always discuss this with your teachers.

In desk or literature based research, CAW (n.d.) and University of Bedfordshire (2018) recommend that students include either:

- The theoretical approach or framework used and/or
- The literature search strategy (data bases, search engines etc.) and/or

Guide to Writing a Methodology in Desk Based Research and an annotated student example

Dual Diagnosis is a complex condition which can be understood both objectively and subjectively by researchers. There is debate regarding its origins, with evidence for both genetic and environmental factors. Whereas the research into genetics would benefit most from the adoption of **positivist** methods, research into environmental factors would be better understood through the use of **constructionist** methods (Bryman 2004: 11-16) **Therefore for the purpose of this research, a pragmatist epistemology, which will combine both positive and constructionist approaches, will be utilised.** Putnam, suggests that a pragmatist epistemology provides rich understanding of experience and science (Hookway 2017). He believed it provides an objective base on which to evaluate and critique institutions and their practice making it an ideal paradigm for the understanding of dual diagnosis.

This research project **will analyse** the findings of **secondary research**. As dual diagnosis is a complex condition, a broad range of topics must be considered, using **mixed methods**, alongside **inductive** and **deductive thinking**. This **will allow** for insight into the analysis of research based both on specific **hypothesis**, but also research investigating more generalised assumptions. This **will provide** a rounded and thorough investigation. Although this investigation **will not undertake** any **primary research**, **grounded theory** is the most appropriate research strategy due to its emphasis on the **continuous analysis** and **coding of data** (Sarantakos 2005: 347-350). This **will provide** the flexibility necessary for concepts to arise from the research, which is an important element of **exploratory research** such as this.

In order to determine relevant databases, this review **began** by searching Google

Daniel Quinn
The writer has **justified the methodological approach** used in their research.
They have selected an approach that allows the best of both methods (positivist and constructionist).

- Are you able to justify the method you have chosen?
- What do you need to know in order to justify it?

Daniel Quinn
Further justification is provided through reference to an established author in the subject area

Daniel Quinn
The writer is using the future perspective to inform the reader about their methods (*will + verb*)

Daniel Quinn
Look at the words in bold.
They are all terms related to research and research methodologies. Do you understand them?

If not, it would be useful to look them up so you can try and use them in your own writing.

Outputs

1. Writing guides for the final project
   - Stages, moves and lexicogrammatical features for each section
   - Disciplinary and research differentiation for crucial differences
2. Annotated examples of student writing in final project
   - Majority of subject areas
   - 70% and above
   - Align with writing guides
3. Final project writing workshops for specific subject areas

Outcomes

Has the research changed perceptions of the Academic Writing Service?

- Significantly fewer referrals from staff for grammar checking and proofreading

- Increase in communication with those subject teachers who completed the survey

- Improvements in our approach and practice

  o Cooperative and collaborative

  o Subject aligned resources

  o Research informed

Next Steps

- Further research on final projects: interviews and detailed textual analysis of submissions

- Continue to initiate opportunities to work **with** subject specialists at CU Coventry as specialists in our own right

- Use this to create more resources and teaching materials and sessions

Conclusions

- Differences in teacher perceptions of final projects within subject areas

- Practical research is a way for an EAP/academic writing provision to transform its standing within an institution

- Helps establish new networks

- Subject specificity in resources and teaching is best achieved through cooperation and collaboration with teaching staff

Thank you for listening

Questions?

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