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1. Introduction

Studiosity is an online study success service that provides routine, personalised, formative feedback for students. This is delivered in partnership with schools, further education colleges and universities in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Dubai and Hong Kong. Studiosity connects students with academic writing and core skills Subject Specialists who provide feedback on their writing assignments and help them to work through problems in live chat sessions. These services are available to students 24/7, 365 days of the year. Studiosity was introduced to the UK in 2016/17, and now partners with 22 higher education providers (HEPs).

2. About the review

This review examines the experience of HEPs in the UK of partnering with Studiosity, and addresses these questions:

- 1. What do HEPs partnering with Studiosity aim to achieve?
- 2. How have partner institutions implemented Studiosity?
- 3. What impact has Studiosity had on students, staff and institutions?

It combines evidence from:

- Five online focus groups with 32 staff from four institutions.
- Three online one-to-one interviews with institutional managers (including senior leaders and operational managers).
- Institutional data about continuation, progression and attainment (2020/21).
- Information and data from Studiosity about student usage.
- Previous research reports about Studiosity UK.
- Wider literature and information about the experience and impact of partnering with Studiosity.

Two institutional case studies have been prepared drawing on this evidence base: Multi-disciplinary London University (MLU) with a diverse student population aiming to close awarding gaps, and Northern Regional University (NRU) with a large population of commuter and first in family students, aiming provide support to all students and improve academic outcomes.



3. What partners want from Studiosity

The review identified many things that partners wish to achieve by partnering with Studiosity. These are grouped into six categories, as presented in table 1.

Table 1: Broad and specific reasons for partnering with Studiosity

Broad reasons for partnering with Studiosity	More specific reasons for partnering with Studiosity
Provide services to students	Provide support to all students. Provide writing feedback 'at scale' to a large number of students. Provide writing feedback out of hours (particularly evenings and weekends). Provide an online service available to students not on campus. Provide an affordable academic support across multiple campuses
Improve student experience, satisfaction and wellbeing.	Develop students' academic skills. Develop students' confidence. Reduce student anxiety. Benefit international, first in family, commuter, mature and disabled students who struggle with the transition to HE and/or with academic writing. Develop students' understanding of academic integrity. Offer personalised support. Consistency of writing support across multiple campuses.
Improve student outcomes: continuation and attainment.	A targeted approach to improve the attainment of students from specific groups. Improve continuation rates of specific student groups.
Close or eliminate awarding gaps between student groups.	Reduce awarding gaps, particularly between students who are from minority ethnic groups and White students, and between international and home students.
Evidence about student support.	Provide evidence of supporting students and giving formative feedback. Learn more about students' writing support needs.
Make the most of limited institutional resources.	Reduce the workload of academic staff. Complement and extend the work of a small academic skills team. Free up professional service and academic development staff for more complex tasks.

4. A focus on student impact

The current UK context requires higher education providers to both improve the student experience and outcomes and reduce differentials between student groups, and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions intended to achieve these outcomes. Evaluating learning, widening participation and student success interventions is challenging (e.g., Devlin 2008, Chalmers and Gardiner 2015, Harrison et al 2018, Thomas 2020a). Programme Theory evaluation tools, in particular Theory of Change (ToC), can overcome some of the challenges,



and are promoted by the government (HM Treasury, 2020), the Office for Students (OfS 2019) and the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO, set up by OfS in 2019, https://taso.org.uk/). A ToC approach makes the relationship between activities/outputs and impact explicit and identifies intermediate outcomes that indicate progress towards longer-term goals. Thomas 2020a has conceptualised 'intermediate indicators' as short-term benefits, and medium-term outcomes. A logic chain can be used as an alternative programme theory evaluation tool to visualise the relationship between intervention activities, short-term benefits, medium-term outcomes, and longer-term impact. The Studiosity logic chain underpins the evaluation framework that has been developed as an outcome of this review and structures the presentation of the findings (sections 5-9).

Figure 1: Studiosity logic chain





5. How partners have implemented Studiosity

In terms of how higher education providers have implemented Studiosity there is much in common, and some unique features. The two case studies demonstrate many of the similarities and differences.

MLU has a diverse student population, with more than half of students from ethnic minority groups and around a third being mature students; 60% are commuters, often spending a relatively long time travelling. Initially Studiosity was introduced as a pilot into one faculty with low rates of student satisfaction (especially around assessment and feedback). The pilot found that the students appreciated having access to the service in the evenings and the weekends, they liked the personalised feedback, and they reported high rates of satisfaction. Studiosity was then offered to all level 4 (first year undergraduate) students and is now available to all students; it is targeted at students making the transition into academic learning. Explicit Studiosity branding is retained, but the service is very clearly provided and endorsed by the University. Studiosity is advertised to students on the VLE, and students may be encouraged to use it by teaching and professional staff, especially as a first port of call. For example, if a student books an academic skills session they may initially be signposted to Studiosity. Studiosity is often embedded into academic programmes through the validation process, as one of the ways of developing students' academic skills. 8% of all eligible students use Studiosity, but this is 12% of level 4 and 5 students and only 1% of level 6 students.

NRU is a large, multi-disciplinary university recruiting strongly from the region; it has a significant population of commuter and first in family students. The university promotes support as the norm for everyone, and Studiosity is offered to all students. NRU offers a tripartite approach to supporting students, combining discipline-specific academic advisers, with central academic and pastoral support and advice and work experience to improve students' employability and outcomes. Studiosity is embedded into existing academic support services, and does not have a completely separate identity. Studiosity is advertised on their webpage about essential higher education skills, it is promoted and accessed via the virtual learning environment, and use of Studiosity is encouraged by academic advisors. One of the most effective ways of informing students about Studiosity is in big lectures, but this is more difficult since the COVID-19 pandemic. Studiosity is used by 10% of level 4 students, 11% of level 5, 14% of level 6 and 11% of level 7 (PGT) students.

The common features of implementation are:

- Studiosity is part of a suite of academic development and support services, rather than being used in isolation or replacing other services.
- Studiosity is promoted through a range of mechanisms, particularly the VLE, but
 including staff and promotional activities. Pike (2022) found at the University of
 Bedfordshire, students 'almost universally found out about the service via VLE-Based
 announcements' (almost 70%) and the other key mechanisms was via a lecturer (nearly
 20%).
- Both the case studies institutions, and others implemented a pilot. In each case the
 evidence has been persuasive and led to an institution-wide roll-out. The Studiosity
 case studies (https://www.studiosity.com/success-stories) describe the pilots that
 various institutions have undertaken.
- Following successful pilots, the case study institutions MLU and NRU have implemented full roll-outs to all students, and this is common. Some HEPs have



reported that they have had to reduce the number of submissions each student can have to ration the service and ensure a balance between the number of individual users, the added value, and the cost.

One university involved in the staff focus groups described how Studiosity is built into the assessment of one first year course. Before the assessment, students must submit their assignment to Studiosity; they must then revise the assignment in line with the feedback, and then the assessment and the Studiosity feedback report must be submitted. This model is designed to encourage students to use Studiosity, and engage with the feedback, to contribute to their writing development at the beginning of their academic career. This is seen as particularly important given the low confidence of the students who take this course.

Other institutions have taken a similar approach, for example the University of Roehampton, where student engagement with Studiosity during the pilot period was 25.8% of all eligible students (https://www.studiosity.com/case-study-roehampton). A campaign for new undergraduates to use Studiosity for their first formative assessment at the University of Sunderland resulted in around 24% of level 4 students using the service (https://www.studiosity.com/case-study-sunderland). This approach was evaluated by the proportion of students who used Studiosity for their formative assignment and who passed the module (research methods) on the first attempt. This found a significant and strong association between doing the formative assessment and passing first attempt (Rees, 2022).



6. Student participation and usage

In the UK writing feedback is currently the most popular Studiosity service, accounting for around 96% of interactions, and therefore the review focuses on the Studiosity writing feedback service.

- Across a sample of five higher education providers in the UK use varies from around 10% of eligible students to 25%.
- Each student in this sample used Studiosity an average of twice (across a two-year period).
- This analysis found April is the busiest month, and Wednesday is the most popular day to use Studiosity (but this varies between HEPs). The most active time is between 16.00 to 17.00, but 54% of use takes place out of hours (17.00–9.00). Across these five institutions out of hours usage ranges from 49% to 58%. In the wider evidence, out of hours usage ranged from 43% to 77%.
- Usage varies between levels and student characteristics. The two case study institutions had different usage rates in relation to these factors for 2020/21, which can be seen in table 2.
- MLU has higher use in levels 4 and 5, while NRU has highest use in levels 6 and 7.
- In both case study institutions, Studiosity was used more by students from lower socio-economic groups than higher socio-economic groups (based on quintiles 1 and 2 for both the index of multiple deprivation IMD and POLAR4 measures compared to quintiles 3, 4 and 5).
- In both institutions mature students have higher usage rates than young students, and male students have lower rates of usage than female and non-binary genders (where this data is available).
- NRU has a higher rate of usage by ethnic minorities compared to White students, whereas at MLU the reverse is true.
- A higher proportion of international students use Studiosity, compared to home students, at NRU, and a lower proportion at MLU.

Staff discussed reasons why more students do not use Studiosity, and this might include:

- Poor time management, resulting in insufficient time to submit an assignment and act upon the feedback before the submission deadline.
- Unwillingness to invest time in developing capacity and preferring a third party to simply improve their assignment.
- Legitimacy of using a writing feedback service.
- Concern that a free to use service (as Studiosity is in partner institutions) is inferior to a service they pay for.
- Perhaps not understanding what Studiosity offers.



Table 2: Usage data from case study institutions, 2020/21

	University	MLU		NRU	
	Student group	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	Level 4	638	12%	695	10%
	Level 5	522	12%	767	11%
	Level 6	27	1%	938	14%
	Level 7	98	5%	536	11%
Level 4	White	287	16%	507	10%
	Ethnic minorities	248	9%	183	13%
	Home	601	13%	645	10%
	International	36	6%	50	13%
	Under 21 on entry	382	11%	437	9%
	21 and over on entry	256	15%	258	14%
	Female	511	17%	505	13%
	Male	125	6%	188	6%
	IMD 3-5	249	15%	349	9%
	IMD1&2	313	12%	314	12%
	POLAR4 3-5	377	12%	294	9%
	POLAR4 1& 2	123	16%	366	11%



7. Students' experience and immediate benefits

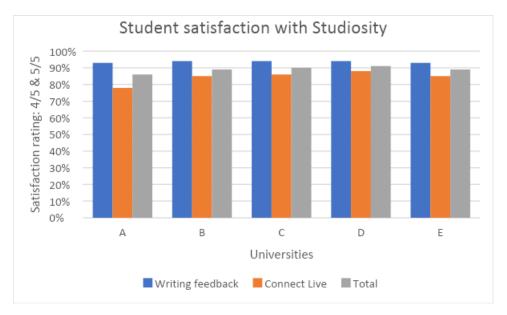
Students' experience of Studiosity can be examined in relation to *service* and *learning* experiences (Brodie et al, 2021). The former includes timeliness, communication and clarity of feedback, and is considered under the heading of 'satisfaction', while the latter relates to developing confidence, understanding and improving writing skills. The review is primarily focused on the learning experience, and this section considers the following short-term learning benefits:

- Confidence with writing
- Confidence to access other writing development and wellbeing services
- Writing skills
- Confidence and understanding to improve academic integrity
- Motivation
- Wellbeing

Satisfaction

Immediate feedback from students indicates that they are highly satisfied with Studiosity. Students' satisfaction with writing feedback is between 93% and 94%, while satisfaction with connect live is 78% and 88%, and total satisfaction is between 86% and 91%.

Chart 1: Student satisfaction



Source: Studiosity data, five UK HEPs, who have all used Studiosity across two consecutive years (04/20–04/21 and 04/21–04/22). Satisfaction relates to students rating their satisfaction as either 4/5 – satisfied, or 5/5 – extremely satisfied.



Confidence

I found that the feedback was very empowering, but like always, always getting better. And it did improve my marks, but it also improved my confidence. Staff focus group 1 (former student).

Confidence was widely discussed in the focus groups and is reported in the wider literature (Brodie et al 2021, Dollinger et al 2020, Pike 2022) as an important way in which students benefit from Studiosity. The UK report on the student experience (Thomas 2019, based on 419 responses) found that the majority of students (79%) thought that Studiosity had improved their confidence.

Gateway access other services

I think it's more of a steppingstone... some students, they may struggle with help-seeking behaviour. Studiosity is another good way to transition into the idea of seeking help, and then maybe looking at attending, a 1 to 1, or something like, the skill centre, after they've used Studiosity. Staff focus group 2.

Staff in the focus groups felt that Studiosity feedback gives students the confidence to ask for additional support with their writing development, and more widely. 'Intervention notices' require the HEP to follow up and offer students additional writing support, and Studiosity can identify students with specific issues, such as learning differences, and flag them to the institution. Studiosity can also signpost students to specific institutional services, such as named wellbeing and support services. It was generally agreed that Studiosity acts as a gateway to other services, both by building confidence to access help, and through direct referrals.

Skills

Developing students' academic skills underpins the decisions of many HEPs to partner with Studiosity. The UK report on the impact of Studiosity on the student experience (Thomas 2019) found that the majority of students (79%, based on 419 responses) reported that Studiosity had improved their study skills. Research at one institution found that Studiosity had been particularly helpful to international postgraduate taught students, supporting them to develop skills (and confidence) to study successfully in the UK, especially adjusting to a different assessment regime.

...they were talking about how useful Studiosity was for them in helping them to develop and get feedback on those writing skills as they transfer... [they] were really feeling a bit shaky because they didn't know what was expected of them and they were finding Studiosity useful in that domain. Staff focus group 1.

In the focus groups a range of 'skills' that students might expect to gain from using Studiosity was generated.

- Writing skills
- Organisation and structuring of writing
- Grammar and punctuation
- Referencing
- Academic English



- Time management and planning
- Learning how to learn
- Critical thinkers
- Problem solvers
- Academic integrity

Academic integrity

Academic integrity was singled out. Studiosity's writing feedback service develops students' understanding about how to cite and reference. It also develops their confidence in their own ability to undertake academic writing without needing to either unintentionally or deliberately resort to plagiarism, or other forms of academic misconduct.

Motivation

Developing students' confidence and skills may contribute to improving students' motivation. Thomas (2019) found that the majority of students (69% of 419 responses) thought that Studiosity had improved their motivation. Brodie et al (2021) found that 'motivation' is widely commented on in the student feedback, but it did not occur as a significant theme in the focus group discussions.

Wellbeing

Studiosity contributes to wellbeing as it quickly provides reassurance and reduces anxiety. Many students seem anxious about their writing, and being able to receive writing feedback at any time of the day is valuable. This theme is discussed more fully in section 8.



8. Student outcomes in the medium-term

The section focuses on the 'medium term': the extent to which the benefits of using Studiosity endure and continue to be advantageous to users. In particular:

- Improvement (the application of skills to future assignments).
- Increased submission of assessments and improved attainment
- Increased student satisfaction with their course
- Improved continuation and progression
- Better mental health

Improvement (application of skills to future assignments)

Brodie et al (2021) identify 'positive improvement' as one of the outcomes of Studiosity, which they define as 'students indicating they will also apply what they have learned to both current and future work' (p14). This supports students to be effective independent learners and to be more successful in the longer-term. Thomas (2019) found that more than 80% of students said that they had learnt 'a lot' or 'a reasonable amount' since using Studiosity. More specifically, the majority of students (93.1%) felt that Studiosity specialists provided feedback that would help them improve future assignments.

Increased submission of assessments and improved attainment

Improvement can be 'tested' by examining attainment outcomes. A positive correlation between using Studiosity and higher attainment is found in each of the case study institutions (see chart 2), and across diversity groups.

At both MLU and NRU students who use Studiosity have increased levels of 'higher attainment' compared to non-users. This is true across a range of characteristics: the differentiation for Black, Asian and minority ethnic students is more pronounced than for White students (although the sample is quite small). This pattern is also true when comparing students of different gender, POLAR quintile and IMD quintile. The only notable exception to this trend was when comparing Home with International students at Level 7: in both universities, there was little differentiation between users and non-users, with some comparisons in favour of non-users; this might suggest that the weaker students are accessing additional support, and in a one-year postgraduate taught programme they are not able to 'catch up' with other students. Overall, however, the data points to a positive correlation between better attainment and use of Studiosity. A chi-square test of association comparing numbers of students achieving 'high attainment' and those that did not for users and non-users shows a significant difference between groups at Level 4 (χ 2 (df=1, N=4653)= 107.8, p<0.01), Level 5 (χ 2 (df=1, N=3939)= 130.3, p<0.01) and Level 6 (χ 2 (df=1, N=3909)= 4.2, p=0.03).



MLU Level 4 Non-user User 70% Level 5 Non-user 74% User Level 6 Non-user User 81% NRU Level 6 81% Non-user User 91% 0% 100% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% High Achievement in Category (%)

Chart 2: Overall High Attainment by Institution & Level for Users & Non-users.

Source: Data for 2020/21 supplied by MLU and NRU to the research team and analysed for this review.

Increased student satisfaction

Another way in which the enduring nature of the impact of Studiosity can be measured is by looking at student satisfaction. When Studiosity users answered questions from the National Student Survey (NSS) about their experience of their course in general, Studiosity users who were full-time students had a higher level of satisfaction with their course than the student population as a whole in relation to NSS question 27, and in relation to all of the questions about Assessment and Feedback, and most questions about Academic Support on their course. (Thomas 2019, p8). This may indicate that Studiosity improves student satisfaction, and is worthy of further exploration as both a medium-term outcome and longer-term impact indicator.

Improved continuation and progression

At MLU, the pattern overall was that Studiosity users were more likely to complete their course and progress compared with non-users, with the differential being quite large in many cases. In contrast, at NRU, the trend was that non-users were slightly more likely to progress. However, we also note that a higher proportion of non-users did not complete the year at NRU than users. It appears that at MLU, use of Studiosity raises overall progression rates; whereas at NRU, it helps more students to complete the year, although they don't necessarily progress, perhaps due to other external factors.

A previous review of UK data between 2018–19 across six institutions (Thomas 2020b) found that the student continuation rate was higher amongst Studiosity users than non-users, and this difference was significant in three institutions, and in four of the five universities that provided

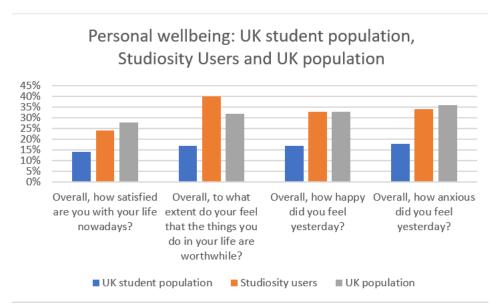


progression data, the progression of Studiosity users was higher than the progression of non-users of Studiosity, and in three of the institutions the difference was significant.

Better mental health

Improved wellbeing could be both a short-term benefit, and a more enduring medium-term outcome. Previous analysis (Thomas 2019) using the four personal well-being questions developed by the National Office for Statistics finds that while students generally have worse personal wellbeing than the UK population as a whole, using Studiosity appears to improve wellbeing on all of the indicators (see chart 3). Thus, improved student mental health and wellbeing might be an intermediate outcome of Studiosity.

Chart 3: Studiosity improves wellbeing



From Thomas 2019. (Data sources: UK student population HEPI/Advance HE, 2019, Studiosity users: Thomas 2019 and UK population, aged 20–24, 2017–18: Office for National Statistics cited in HEPI/Advance HE 2019).



9. Longer-term impact

In the longer-term Studiosity may impact on:

- Degree completion
- Degree attainment
- Equity gaps

Completion

Completion of the target award is a useful indicator of longer-term impact, but no evidence in the UK or internationally has been examined to test the contribution of Studiosity to completion. The continuation and progression data reported in section 7 indicates that Studiosity may improve continuation and progression rates. It would be relatively easy to collect completion data, and institutions should consider examining the contribution of Studiosity to degree completion rates.

Degree attainment

Degree attainment, as distinct from attainment in a particular level of study, it a useful longer-term impact indicator. Again, no data on this has been examined, so level 6 data is used here as a proxy for degree attainment. Overall, at Level 6, Studiosity users are more likely than non-users to achieve 'high attainment'. A chi-square test shows a significant difference between users and non-users at Level 6 (χ 2 (df =1, N = 5555) = 44.9, p<0.01).

- At MLU 81% (22 out of 27, a relatively small sample size) of level 6 Studiosity users were 'high attainment' compared with 60% (2030 out of 3382) of non-users. A chi-square test of association comparing numbers of students achieving 'high attainment' and those that did not for users and non-users shows a significant difference between groups at Level 6 (χ2 (df = 1, N =3909) = 4.2, p = 0.03).
- At NRU 91% (728 out of 804) of level 6 Studiosity users were categorised as 'high attainment: good hons 1st/2:1' (as opposed to 'low attainment': 2:2/3rd/pass or fail), compared with 81% of non-users (3833 out of 4751). The remaining students fell into the category of 'low attainment', with none of the students failing the course.

Equity: Closing outcome gaps between student groups

This section considers if the gaps in outcomes between students from specifically targeted groups and more advantaged groups are closed by using Studiosity. This analysis indicates that it can tentatively be suggested that Studiosity contributes to closing equity gaps.

In relation to the awarding gap between white and ethnic minorities:

- At MLU the awarding gap between white and ethnic minority students at level 6 is 13 percentage points for non-Studiosity users, and this gap is eliminated between White and ethnic minority students who use Studiosity.
- At NRU the award gap between white and ethnic minority students at level 6 is 18 percentage points for non-Studiosity users, and this gap is reduced to 14 percentage points for Studiosity users.



• As such, it can tentatively be suggested Studiosity use may contribute to reducing the failure rate and closing the awarding gap for between white and ethnic minority students, as shown in chart 4.

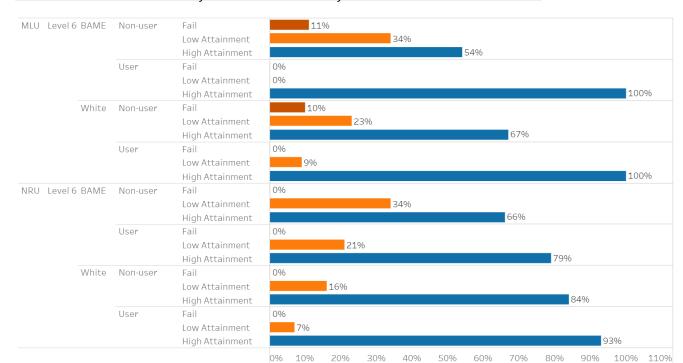


Chart 4: Overall Attainment by Institution & Ethnicity for Level 6 Users & Non-users.

Source: Data for 2020/21 supplied by MLU and NRU to the research team and analysed for this review.

The awarding gap between home and international students can be examined with evidence from NRU (as there were no international level 6 users at MLU).

- For non-Studiosity users the awarding gap between home and international students is 21 percentage points.
- For Studiosity users the awarding gap between home and international students is reduced to 11 percentage points.

The findings in relation to the awarding gap between students from higher and lower socio-economic groups (based on the Index of Multiple Deprivation), is more ambiguous.

- At MLU, there is a 10%-point gap between 'high attainment' for non-users at IMD 1&2 (56%) and IMD 3-5% (66%), but this gap disappears for Studiosity users, where both groups had 100% 'high achievement'.
- At NRU, the gap between non-users was 9%-points, with 76% High Achievement at IMD 1&2 and 85% IMD 3-5; however, the gaps widens slightly for users, there the gap is 12% points, with 83% High Achievement for IMD 1-2 and 95% for IMD 3-5. The reason for this is unknown but may relate to NRU reaching more-disadvantaged students.

In terms of continuation and progression, at MLU using Studiosity is correlated with improved continuation and progression. While at NRU using Studiosity is correlated with improved continuation, but not improved progression. These patterns are replicated for students with specific characteristics and can be used to demonstrate the extent to which Studiosity is



correlated with and may be contributing to promoting equity by closing gaps between student groups.

- At MLU the gap in progression from level 5 to level 6 between white and ethnic minority students is reduced from 19 percentage points to 3 percentage points for Studiosity users.
- At NRU the gap in progression level 5 to level 6 between white and ethnic minority studies is increased from 3 percentage points to 11 percentage points for Studiosity users, but the continuation gap (i.e., completing level 5) is reduced.
- At MLU the gap in progression from level 5 to level 6 between home and international students is 8 percentage points for non-Studiosity users, and this gap is eliminated for Studiosity users with international students being more likely to continue into level 6 than home students.
- For NRU the progression gap between home and international students is larger for Studiosity users than non-users, while the continuation gap (i.e., completion of the year) is smaller.
- At MLU the gap in progression from level 5 to level 6 between higher and lower socio-economic status remains unchanged (using both POLAR4 and IMD measures).
- At NRU the gap in progression from level 5 to level 6 between students from higher and lower socio-economic groups decreases or remains unchanged, using POLAR4 and IMD measures respectively.

In summary, Studiosity may be contributing to closing and eliminating awarding gaps between students with different characteristics; there is also evidence about improving continuation rates and closing gaps, but in relation to progression gaps the picture is less clear. These findings certainly warrant further investigation by HEPs, using a more rigorous methodology (Crawford et al, 2017).



10. Staff experience and benefits

We're such a small team for a university of our size and intake and there's only so much you can physically do. So, it's nice to have Studiosity, in a sense as, a net to catch people that possibly can't always see us when they need to. And it's nice for staff to be, you know, staff on courses to be able to refer students because I suppose it takes the heat off them a little bit. Staff focus group 4.

Academic staff

The focus groups identified the following ways in which academic staff benefit from Studiosity:

- Being able to refer students to Studiosity saves teaching staff and personal tutors / academic advisers time, reduces workload, and prevents them from feeling obliged to undertake additional roles, such as additional formative feedback.
- Having a service staff can refer students to is particularly useful for academic staff who
 do not have the skills or experience of correcting writing, and it saves them time
 searching for academic resources for them to you use or to refer students to.
- Providing students with feedback on their writing helps to level the playing field between students, and reduces anxiety for students, both of which benefit staff.
- Studiosity enables staff to focus on marking the contents, and their feedback is focused on academic matters rather than writing issues.

It was widely acknowledged that initially academic staff may be wary of Studiosity, but once they have experienced Studiosity they are reassured and find that being able to refer students to Studiosity can both reduce their workload and their stress.

Academic staff are important in encouraging students to utilise Studiosity. Where staff are positive and proactively promote the writing feedback service, usage is higher, and staff and students seem to be happier. When teaching staff embed Studiosity into the assessment process, academic staff can increase the value of the service to students and to the institution.

Academics in certain disciplines may feel Studiosity is less well suited to the writing needs of their students: law and creative writing were singled out in one focus group discussion, and it was noted that some disciplines, such as engineering, have fewer writing requirements. There is no evidence however that Studiosity is less valuable in some disciplines than others.



Professional services staff

Professional services include academic skills and writing development and pastoral support and wellbeing services. Some academic skills and writing development staff have appeared wary of the introduction of Studiosity, but in the institutions that have piloted and introduced Studiosity more widely, these concerns have dissipated. In summary:

- Professional academic skills staff recognise that Studiosity offers a way of reaching larger numbers of students than they have the capacity to see, and Studiosity can deal with more routine writing development issues.
- Introducing Studiosity has resulted in more students accessing academic skills support provided by the university.
- Academic skills staff have found that Studiosity has freed up their time to undertake
 additional activities, including embedding skills into courses, working with more
 complex student needs, and developing new areas of work.
- Staff with a wellbeing remit felt that it was useful to be able to signpost students to Studiosity, irrespective of the time of day, especially for students who are anxious.

11. Institutional benefits and returns

Drawing on comments and evidence from across the case studies, focus groups and wider literature, the following 'institutional benefits' have been identified.

- Improved student experience, satisfaction and outcomes, and closing equity gaps between student groups.
- Generating improvements and evidence in relation to experience, outcomes and equity, to use in submissions to the Office for students in relation to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and Access and Participation Plans (APP).
- Understanding more about students' writing and academic support needs and providing inclusive support and contributing to widening access.
- An effective partnership approach to improving students' learning and providing a demonstrable return on investment.

Studiosity allows HEPs to offer writing development to all students in a relatively cost-effective way. Senior leaders argued that while Studiosity is not a cheap service, they are not able to replicate the service in an affordable way, and so it represents good value for money, and allows them to demonstrate commitment to student success and reach a large number of students.



12. Conclusions and evaluation

The review indicates that HEPs have partnered with Studiosity to achieve a range of goals, and that the way in which they have used and experienced Studiosity differs to some extent, but there are significant commonalities. The findings about usage show variations from around 10–25%; the rate of usage by students with different characteristics seems to vary, with NRU managing to achieve higher rates of usage by students from groups that have lower rates of continuation and attainment.

Staff, whilst initially sceptical, have appreciated the benefits accrued to students, and have identified ways in which both academic and professional staff have been freed up from some aspects of their work in supporting the writing development of large numbers of students who lack confidence or skills. Student benefits are extensive, and include confidence, skills, understanding academic integrity and increased continuation and attainment. The different approaches demonstrated by the two case study institutions warrant further exploration, in particular the merits of targeting level 4 and 5 students to use Studiosity to develop their academic skills, compared to greater use by level 6 students when they undertake an extended piece of independent study.

The data analysis has limitations, as there is not a control group, and is comparing students who have chosen to use Studiosity, with those who have not. It does however suggest that Studiosity may contribute to reducing awarding gaps between more and less advantaged groups of students. The review indicates the need for further evaluation at the institutional level, and making more use of experimental comparative designs.

The evidence collected in this review about the implementation, usage, and impact over time of Studiosity, has been used to create an evaluation framework, informed by a theory of change approach (which is endorsed by the government and the Office for Students, see section 4). This framework will be published as an evaluation toolkit, and can be used by HEPs to assess the extent to which partnering with Studiosity is meeting their objectives, and can contribute to the evidence they are able to submit as part of the TEF and APP processes. It may also inform experimental evaluation work.



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To access the full report, including the full data sets, wider research references and two partner case studies (LU and NRU) in full, email research@studiosity.com and request the Professor Liz Thomas Full Report.

To find out more information about the Studiosity Evaluation framework and guidelines toolkit, email research@studiosity.com, FAO Isabelle Bristow, Managing Director UK and Europe.

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