

VSC STUDENT HANDBOOK



**VOICE STUDY
CENTRE**

Voice Study Centre Student Handbook

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1. Welcome

Welcome to the Voice Study Centre!

Congratulations on all the work that has led you here and thank you for choosing to study with us. We are really looking forward to working with you and to helping you fulfil your personal and academic ambitions. We hope your time at the Voice Study Centre will be a very happy, inspiring and exciting one and that you take full advantage of all that VSC and the wider University have to offer you.

This handbook is an essential guide for you and outlines the various things you will need to know about the Voice Study Centre. It contains lots of really useful and important information, so please read it and be sure to keep a copy of it so that you can refer to it as and when you need to.

Make sure you bookmark our Centre's website, too.

Our staff members are here to help you, so make a note of their contact details and you will find more information about their roles in this handbook.

We look forward to seeing you in classes and lectures and to sharing our interest in and enthusiasm for the study of voice. It will be a privilege to see the great contributions that you will make to the Voice Study Centre.

2. Introduction

Your Student Handbook will tell you everything you need to know about the Voice Study Centre, the University, its academic policies and procedures, and all of the resources that are available to you.

At Essex, we put the success of our students at the heart of everything we do and want to support you to achieve outstanding outcomes. We are absolutely determined to provide you with the best Essex education and student experience we can, while safeguarding your health and wellbeing.

We celebrate diversity and challenge inequality. We are a truly diverse community where differences are celebrated, and individuality is valued. Your contribution is welcomed and encouraged based on your own thoughts and experiences. As part of our community, you will have the freedom to explore, experiment, challenge your discipline and have your ideas shaped by peer and professional knowledge from all over the world. Essex is about more than just getting a degree: we have so much to offer our students.

Things might have to change and adapt over the year, so make sure that you're checking online and keeping in touch with the Voice Study Centre for the latest updates.

3. Practicalities and getting started

3.1 Registration

Enrolment with the Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex

All students will be enrolled with both the Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex. This is a two-step process:

1. Voice Study Centre Enrolment:

As part of the admissions and enrolment process, you will first be enrolled with the Voice Study Centre. This ensures you are registered as a student of the Centre and have access to all Centre-specific communications and support.

2. University of Essex Enrolment:

During the Pre-course period, the Voice Study Centre will facilitate your enrolment with the University of Essex. This step is essential for you to become a fully registered University of Essex student.

Upon successful enrolment with the University, you will receive:

- A University of Essex identification number (student ID)
- An Essex email address
- An IT account
- Access to the University of Essex library and digital resources

This dual enrolment ensures you benefit from the full range of support, facilities, and opportunities offered by both the Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex.

Important:

You must complete all required registration steps, including payment of any fees (where required), by the published deadlines. Failure to do so may mean you are unable to begin your course.

The Essex Experience at the Voice Study Centre

As a student at the Voice Study Centre (VSC), you are part of a unique learning community. The VSC is an independent organisation, but as an **Associate College of the University of Essex**, it fully embraces and upholds the values, standards, and student-centred ethos of the University. This partnership means you benefit from both the specialist expertise and support of the Voice Study Centre and the wider opportunities, resources, and principles of the University of Essex.

4.1 Embracing Our Shared Values

The Voice Study Centre is committed to the same core values as the University of Essex: inclusivity, diversity, academic excellence, and student empowerment. You are encouraged to be bold, to challenge ideas, and to contribute your unique perspective to our vibrant community. All students are expected to act respectfully, responsibly, and as ambassadors for both the Centre and the University. The <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/values/code-of-student-conduct> applies to all students enrolled through this partnership.

4.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

VSC and the University of Essex are proud of their diverse student and staff communities. Everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of background, identity, or beliefs. The Centre and University are committed to equal opportunities and to providing a supportive environment where all students can thrive. You can read more about the University's <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/equality-and-diversity/equality-and-diversity-policy-and-strategy>

4.3 Belonging to Two Communities

As a VSC student, you are part of both the Voice Study Centre's specialist community and the wider Essex student body. This means you have access to:

- VSC's tailored academic and pastoral support
- The University of Essex's digital resources, library, and student services

Whether you are an international student, a mature learner, or have specific needs, you will find support and a sense of belonging at both institutions.

4.4 Environmental Sustainability

The Voice Study Centre supports the University of Essex's commitment to environmental sustainability, including the goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2035. As a student, you are encouraged to participate in sustainability initiatives and to make use of resources and activities offered by both VSC and the University, such as the <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/awards-and-achievements/hear>

4.5 Wellbeing

Your wellbeing is a priority for both the Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex. You can access a range of wellbeing services, including counselling and support for students with disabilities or additional needs. Please see our student support section for further details.

4.6 Student Representatives and Getting Involved

The Voice Study Centre (VSC) operates a dedicated student representative system to ensure every student's voice is heard and valued. As an Associate College of the University of Essex,

VSC's approach to student representation aligns with the University's commitment to partnership, inclusivity, and continuous improvement.

Role of Student Representatives: Student reps are elected or nominated from each cohort to act as a bridge between students and the Centre. They gather feedback, raise concerns, and share ideas on behalf of their peers.

Training and Support: All reps receive training and ongoing support to help them fulfil their role effectively, including guidance on gathering feedback, communicating with staff, and signposting students to appropriate support services.

Meetings and Feedback: Reps attend regular meetings with VSC staff (such as Staff–Student Committee Groups), contribute to module feedback sessions, and help ensure that student perspectives inform Centre policies and practices.

Boundaries: Reps do not provide personal advice or academic support but can direct students to the right services or staff members.

Benefits: Serving as a student rep is a valuable opportunity to develop leadership, communication, and organisational skills, while making a positive impact on the student experience.

4.7 How to Get Involved:

Students interested in becoming a representative are encouraged to put themselves forward during the nomination period or speak to the VSC support team for more information.

4.8 Staying Connected

You'll receive updates, news, and opportunities from both the Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex. Stay connected via your canvas email.

5. About the Voice Study Centre

Founded in 2017, the Voice Study Centre has rapidly grown into a nationally respected and internationally recognised institution for voice pedagogy. Our mission is to remove barriers to practitioner development and foster a vibrant, inclusive community of voice professionals.

We offer flexible, fully online postgraduate programmes designed for busy practitioners who are passionate about deepening their understanding of voice science, pedagogy, and research. Our flagship MA in Voice Pedagogy enables students to explore and apply evidence-based research directly to their professional practice. With over 240 students across 32 countries and 134 graduates to date, our alumni have gone on to present at academic conferences, publish research, and implement innovative strategies in their fields.

As an Associate College of the University of Essex, we are proud to collaborate with the Department of Language and Linguistics, further embedding our work within the academic

and local community. We welcome both UK and international applicants, and many of our students have successfully transitioned into research, teaching, and clinical roles.

Beyond our postgraduate programmes, we offer a rich calendar of weekly short courses and guest presentations, catering to anyone with an interest in voice. These sessions span topics such as vocal health, gender-affirming voice work, trauma-informed practice, and applied neuroscience, reflecting our commitment to interdisciplinary learning and professional development. As part of our offering, these short-courses and micro-credentials are available to you throughout the duration of the course and a year after leaving.

5.1 Meet the Team

Debbie Winter – Managing Director: Debbie@voicestudycentre.com

Debbie Winter (LLB Hons, MA) is the founder and driving force behind the Voice Study Centre. With a background in law and professional jazz performance, Debbie transitioned into vocal coaching to address the lack of high-quality, accessible training in voice pedagogy. She has lectured in qualitative research methods, mentored postgraduate students, and published extensively in the Voice and Speech Review, Frontiers, Music and Science and the Australian Voice Review. Her leadership has guided the Centre through partnerships with Cardiff Metropolitan University, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, and now the University of Essex, where the Centre holds Associate College status.

Peter Thompson – Director of Operations: Peter@voicestudycentre.com

Peter brings extensive experience from his role as a technical lead at a Magic Circle law firm. A graduate of the University of Reading, he oversees the Centre's operational infrastructure, ensuring technological and administrative excellence across all departments.

Tracy Theobald – Assistant Director, Head of Student Care and Admissions:

Tracy@voicestudycentre.com

Tracy holds a qualification in Business Administration and has a strong background in leadership and management within administrative environments. She is dedicated to supporting students throughout their academic journey, ensuring a nurturing and responsive learning environment. She is the bastion of the student and is responsible for neurodivergence and learning needs screening, student support plans, disability guidance and signposting and extenuating circumstances guidance.

Alice Cherry – Senior Marketing Officer: Alice@voicestudycentre.com

Alice graduated from Bournemouth University with a degree in Events Management. Her career spans marketing and event coordination across various sectors, and she plays a key role in promoting the Centre's programmes and events.

Phoebe Taylor – Summer Intern: Phoebe@voicestudycentre.com

Phoebe is a Chemistry student at the University of York, entering her third year of her BSc. She brings enthusiasm and a fresh perspective to the marketing team, is passionate about AI and its automation capabilities, and has a growing interest in project management. She was

instrumental in developing the Practitioner Research Centre and was responsible for automating some of our core operational systems. She returns each year as our summer intern, and we look forward to her return in June 2026, where she will continue to expand her portfolio.

Core Academic Staff

Dr Claire Thomas – Senior Lecturer: Claire@voicestudycentre.com

Claire is a singer, teacher, and voice researcher. She lectures in Musical Theatre at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and runs a private studio near Edinburgh. Her research interests include vocal pedagogy and performance practice. She has published in the Journal of Voice and The Australian Voice Review on Muscle Tension Dysphonia and the Physiological Impact of Simultaneous Dancing and Singing.

Louisa Morgan – Lecturer: Louisa@voicestudycentre.com

Louisa is a voice teacher and researcher with a special focus on spoken and sung emotion. She leads spoken voice modules at the Centre and is currently studying for her PhD with the Guildford School of Acting. She has published in the Journal of Theatre Dance and Performance Training and was a guest presenter at the VASTA conference.

Joshua Lee-Cummins – Lecturer: Joshua@voicestudycentre.com

Joshua is a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and PhD candidate in Creative Music Practice at the University of Edinburgh. His work bridges performance, composition, and pedagogy.

Pippa Anderson – Lecturer and one-to-one support specialist:

Pippa@voicestudycentre.com

Pippa holds an Mlit in Music and serves as a senior lecturer and vocal health consultant at Leeds Conservatoire. She also works as a Clinical Vocal Rehabilitation Specialist at Freeman Hospital, integrating clinical and pedagogical expertise. She is an Associate Researcher for Newcastle University and has published a chapter with Leda Searce in the Oxford Handbook of Singing. She specializes in one-to-one coaching and working with neurodivergence.

Dr David Cane – Lecturer: David@voicestudycentre.com

David is a singer, teacher, researcher, and choir director. A former choral scholar at King's College, Cambridge, he studied Theology and Religious Studies and brings a rich interdisciplinary approach to voice education. He specialises in critical disability and research methodology.

Sophie Yaeger – Lecturer: Sophie@voicestudycentre.com

Sophie is a Singer, voice coach, and actor with a background in Musical Theatre and Contemporary Commercial Music. Her teaching blends technical skill with expressive artistry. She is working towards her professional doctorate at UCLAN university.

Research Ethics Committee

Dr Cathy Bollaert – Integrity Officer: Cathy@voicestudycentre.com

Originally from South Africa, Cathy has worked in academic and practitioner roles across Ghana, Sri Lanka, Angola, and Northern Ireland. She specialises in research ethics, reconciliation, identity politics, and peace-building, with a focus on transitional justice and cultural identity.

5.2 Module Leaders

Each module within the **MA Voice Pedagogy** programme is led by a dedicated academic who is responsible for both teaching and supervision. These module leaders bring specialist expertise and are actively involved in delivering content, guiding discussions, and supporting students through their assessments and research.

Introduction to Academic Skills

Module Leader: Debbie Winter

Foundations of Voice Pedagogy – Exploring and Evaluating the Research Literature

Module Leader: Dr Claire Thomas

Developing Research-Based Voice Pedagogy – Designing Tools and Resources

Module Leader: Louisa Morgan

Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching – Pedagogical Theory and Applications

Module Leader: Sophie Yaeger

Research Methods – Understanding and Applying Research in Voice Practice

Module Leaders: Dr David Cane & Joshua Lee-Cummins

Dissertation – Original Research Project

Module Leaders: Dr David Cane & Joshua Lee-Cummins

5:3 Student Support Advisor

Student Support

In addition to academic supervision, every student has access to an Independent Student Advisor, Tracy Theobald, who serves as a bastion of student welfare and advocacy.

Tracy is responsible for:

- Neurodivergence and learning needs screening
- Creating and managing student support plans
- Providing disability guidance and reasonable adjustments
- Signposting to relevant services
- Advising on extenuating circumstances and academic flexibility

Her role ensures that every student receives tailored support, fostering an inclusive and responsive learning environment.

Students who identify with learning needs will also receive additional one-to-one support from Pippa Anderson. Pippa specialises in working with neurodivergence and creates tailored study support with each student on a weekly basis.

5:4 Voice Study Centre Student Resources

The Voice Study Centre (VSC), now an Associate College of the University of Essex, offers a robust suite of student resources tailored for voice professionals pursuing postgraduate education. These resources are designed to support flexible, online learning for busy practitioners.

Virtual Learning Environment: Canvas

Students at VSC access their course materials through **Canvas**, a modern Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Canvas provides:

- **Interactive multimedia content** including video, audio, text, infographics, and quizzes.
- **Lecturecasts** that can be replayed anytime, allowing students to revisit key concepts without relying solely on notes.
- **Discussion forums** for peer interaction and global networking.
- **Live seminars and Q&A sessions**, all recorded for later access.
- **Virtual supervision with tutors for personalized** support.

University of Essex Online Library Access

VSC students benefit from full access to the **University of Essex online library**, which includes:

- A **dedicated library page and catalogue** tailored to VSC students: library.essex.ac.uk/vsc.
- The ability to **expand search results** to include broader academic resources.
- **Inter-library loan (ILL) services** for materials not covered by VSC subscriptions. Students can request digitised resources. Contact: www.library.essex.ac.uk/request-a-resource
- These services ensure that students have access to a wide range of academic journals, textbooks, and research materials, supporting both coursework and independent research.

Additional Support

VSC distinguishes itself with a high level of student support:

- 24-hour counselling
- Neurodiversity screeners
- One-to-one tutor support
- Flexible course design for working professionals
- Short and certified courses that complement the MA programme.

6. Learning and Teaching

6.1 The Academic Year

We follow the [academic calendar](#) for the University of Essex.

6.2 My Course

The MA Voice Pedagogy, delivered by The Voice Study Centre and the University of Essex, is a rigorous, research-led postgraduate programme designed to develop advanced expertise in voice pedagogy, research methods, coaching, mentoring, and practical applications within professional voice practice. The course is delivered online, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity for a diverse cohort of students.

Programme Structure

The MA comprises five core modules, each building upon the last to foster a deep, critical, and practical understanding of voice pedagogy:

Module 1: Foundations of Voice Pedagogy – Exploring and Evaluating the Research Literature

This module introduces students to the breadth of voice pedagogy, drawing on multidisciplinary research to explore practical applications. Students learn to critically evaluate literature, develop academic and reflective writing skills, and apply theory to practice. Key topics include the science of sound, phonation, acoustics, psychoacoustics, respiratory system, vocal mechanism, posture, alignment, and vocal health. The module emphasises advanced research skills, critical thinking, and evidence-based application, preparing students to engage with complex ideas and challenges in voice teaching and practice.

Module 2: Developing Research-Based Voice Pedagogy – Applications in Designing Tools and Resources

Building on the theoretical foundation of Module 1, this module focuses on translating theory into practice. Students design and create practical teaching tools or resources—such as curricula, schemes of work, digital media, or compositions—supported by an evidence-

based rationale. The module encourages creativity and innovation, allowing students to specialise in areas such as singing pedagogy, acoustics, linguistics, psychology, education theory, coaching, mentoring, philosophy, theatre, neuroscience, and speech and language therapy. The emphasis is on research-based design, critical reflection, and the development of tangible outputs to transform professional practice.

Module 3: Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching – Pedagogical Theory and Applications

This module deepens students' understanding of pedagogical theory, broadly interpreted to include coaching, mentoring, and teaching. Students explore the distinctions and interrelationships between these roles, drawing on neuroscience, motor learning, psychology, and education theory. The module addresses the specific needs of performers, including issues such as career instability, performance anxiety, resilience, and burnout. Students develop and implement coaching or mentoring programmes, critically evaluating their own performance and ethical considerations. The flexible approach allows adaptation to individual professional contexts, whether working with groups or one-to-one lessons.

Module 4: Research Methods: Understanding and Applying Research Methods in Voice Practice

This module provides a comprehensive foundation in qualitative and quantitative research methods, enabling students to develop research literacy and practical skills for conducting and evaluating research. Students explore epistemological and ontological assumptions, key theoretical concepts, and methodologies, including action research, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and ethnography. Practical tools include interviews, focus groups, surveys, and data analysis techniques. Quantitative methods cover study design, hypothesis formulation, statistical analysis, and scientific inference. The module culminates in the drafting of a research proposal, preparing students for their dissertation. Employability is enhanced through the development of analytical, statistical, digital, and academic writing skills.

Module 5: Dissertation: Completing and Reporting an Original Research Project

The dissertation module is the capstone of the MA, enabling students to design and execute an original research project in voice pedagogy and practice. Students synthesise previous learning, develop a research question, conduct a literature review, select appropriate methodologies, and apply qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. The module includes ethics training and the submission of an ethics application. Students analyse and present data, evaluate its impact on professional practice, and develop oral presentation skills. Supervision and practical workshops support the research process, culminating in a substantial written dissertation and an oral presentation to expert audiences.

- **Online Delivery:** All modules are taught online, with live lectures, recorded sessions, and extensive digital resources to support asynchronous learning.
- **Inclusivity:** The programme is designed to accommodate neurodiversity and physical disabilities, with transcripts, audio versions, closed captions, and accessible learning platforms.
- **Supervision and Support:** Students benefit from one-to-one supervision, group tutorials, peer-to-peer feedback, and access to a wide range of support services.
- **Employability Skills:** The MA develops advanced research, analytical, communication, IT, problem-solving, and reflective skills, enhancing employability in diverse professional contexts.

6.3: Credits

Module Title	Credit Value
Foundations of Voice Pedagogy: Exploring and Evaluating the Research Literature	30
Developing Research-Based Voice Pedagogy: Applications in Designing Tools and Resources	30
Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching: Pedagogical Theory and Applications	30
Research Methods: Understanding and Applying Research Methods in Voice Practice	30
Dissertation: Completing and Reporting an Original Research Project	60

An MA consists of 180 credits. Please click on the link for a [full guide to the University of Essex Postgraduate Credit Framework](#).

6.4 Learning Outcomes

Module 1: Foundations of Voice Pedagogy

- Convey a comprehensive understanding of techniques and academic conventions applicable to their own research.
- Apply advanced scholarship to their professional practice.
- Adopt critical positions in reading relevant scholarship.
- Reflect critically and creatively within an environment of complex ideas.
- Evaluate and apply theory to practice.
- Develop academic writing skills and authority by presenting their work using appropriate structure and academic conventions.

Module 2: Developing Research-Based Voice Pedagogy

- Critically understand and reflect on principles, theories, techniques, and methodologies related to voice pedagogy, the student's own professional practice, or other voice-related teaching contexts.
- Evaluate methodologies, develop critiques, and apply them to propose a new solution to a teaching problem or challenge.
- Reason critically and creatively, make sound judgments and clearly communicate conclusions.
- Develop and apply relevant theory to create teaching tools or resources.
- Continue to develop academic writing skills and authority by presenting their work using appropriate structure and academic conventions.

Module 3: Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching

- Develop advanced knowledge and a critical awareness of motor learning, coaching, mentoring, psychology and performance coaching theories relevant to practice.
- Develop a critical understanding of the ethical principles and professional codes of conduct that relate to coaching, mentoring, performance coaching and teaching.
- Develop and apply a coaching/mentoring/teaching programme having regard to the differences between them.
- Reflect critically on their own coaching/mentoring performance including critical evaluation of their ethical considerations and areas for future improvement.
- Continue to develop academic writing skills and authority by presenting their work using appropriate structure and academic conventions.

Module 4: Research Methods

- Develop a critical understanding of the theoretical and conceptual foundations of qualitative and quantitative research.
- Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts such as validity, reliability, generalisability, subjectivity and reflexivity.
- Critically appraise and evaluate a range of research methods that are commonly used in voice pedagogy research.
- Select and apply relevant methodologies to research within your professional practice.
- Design appropriate research strategies, frameworks, and tools to collect qualitative and/or quantitative data.
- Provide a rationale for selecting methods appropriate to the research topic and for the intended participants.
- Evaluate the ethical implications of a relevant research design.
- Continue to develop academic writing skills and authority by presenting their work using appropriate structure and academic conventions.

Module 5: Dissertation

- Develop a critical awareness of the key issues in undertaking original research in professional settings.
- Critically evaluate the ethical and moral implications of conducting research having regard to issues of insider research and submit an application to gain ethical clearance.
- Design and conduct an independent research project, using appropriate research methods for the topic.
- Critically analyse research data applying appropriate data analysis techniques.
- Organise and structure an extended written piece of work, advancing clear critical positions.
- Develop oral presentation skills by presenting their work concisely and with authority to professional experts within the field.

6.5 Grade Boundaries

UK Master's Degree Grade Boundaries

Classification Percentage Boundary Description

Distinction	70% and above	Highest achievement
Merit	60–69%	Good/very good performance
Pass	50–59%	Satisfactory performance
Fail	Below 50%	Does not meet requirements

6.6: Accessing Module Content and Teaching Materials

All module content and teaching materials for the MA Voice Pedagogy are provided via the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Each module has its own dedicated “tile” on Canvas. Within these tiles, students will find:

- Structured weekly content (including lecture recordings, PowerPoints, transcripts, and audio versions)
- Module handbooks and reading lists
- Assignment briefs and submission portals
- Guided reading and video library resources
- Discussion forums and group activities
- Links to live and playback sessions
- Support materials for inclusivity and accessibility

Students should regularly check each module tile on Canvas for updates, resources, and announcements from teaching staff. All supervision, feedback, and additional support are also coordinated through Canvas.

6.7 Timetable Information

A **provisional timetable** is sent out to all students before the start of the course to help with initial planning and organisation. Please note that this provisional timetable is **subject to change** as teaching schedules and module arrangements may be updated.

The **final timetable** is confirmed and distributed two weeks before the start of the course. This final version is also uploaded to each module tile within the Canvas Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), where students can access up-to-date session dates, times, and any relevant changes.

Caveat:

While every effort is made to keep the timetable accurate, students should be aware that changes may occur due to unforeseen circumstances. It is essential to check the module tiles on Canvas regularly for the latest information and updates.

6.8 Reading Weeks

Reading Weeks will be scheduled once per academic term, typically falling mid-way through each semester (e.g., late October/early November for Term 1 and February for Term 2). These weeks are designed to provide students with dedicated time for independent study, reflection, and academic consolidation, without the structure of scheduled tutorials or lectures.

Purpose and Principles

The core purpose of Reading Week is to:

- Enable students to catch up on missed readings or lectures.
- Advance ongoing coursework, such as essays, reports, or projects.
- Prepare for upcoming assessments or deepen understanding of complex topics.
- Promote self-directed learning, encouraging students to take ownership of their academic progress.

Reading Week is not a holiday, though it may offer flexibility for rest and personal wellbeing. It is a structured pause in teaching that supports academic success and mental health.

Terms of Reading Week

During Reading Week:

- No tutorials, lectures, or live teaching sessions will be held.

- Students are expected to work independently, using course materials, reading lists, and assignment briefs.
- No new content will be delivered, but students may be provided with optional tasks or suggested readings.
- Support services remain available, including academic writing workshops, wellbeing sessions, and study skills resources.
- No assessments should be scheduled during Reading Week unless assignment details were provided at least two weeks in advance.

Supportive Environment

While formal teaching pauses, universities offer a range of supportive initiatives:

- Online academic writing sessions and study planning workshops.
- Mental health and wellbeing activities, such as therapy dog visits, sleep clinics, and mindfulness classes.

Best Practices for Students

To make the most of Reading Week:

- Set clear goals and prioritise tasks.
- Create a study timetable with breaks.
- Use university resources for guidance and support.
- Balance academic work with rest and personal care.

6.9 Engagement

At the Voice Study Centre, we understand that engagement looks different for everyone. That's why we track it across multiple levels to support your learning journey flexibly and inclusively.

What Counts as Engagement?

We don't just look at attendance—we consider how you interact with your learning in different formats:

- Live Sessions: Attending lectures, tutorials, and guest speaker events.
- One-to-One Tutorials: These are a key part of your learning and are scheduled monthly.
- Canvas Activity: Watching videos, reading materials, and completing tasks online.
- Group Discussions: Participating in peer-led sessions and drop-ins.

How Is It Measured?

Each module includes an engagement score, which helps us understand how you're connecting with the course. Scores range from:

- Excellent
- Good
- Satisfactory
- Poor

These scores are based on your overall participation both live and online and help us identify where extra support might be helpful.

Why It Matters

Tracking engagement helps us:

- Spot early signs of disengagement and offer support.
- Celebrate your progress and contributions.
- Make sure our teaching methods work for different learning styles.

Whether you prefer live interaction or independent study, your engagement is valued and supported.

6.10: Making Changes to Your Study: Moving from the FT to the PT course

If you're thinking about moving from the full-time course to the part-time option, it's easy to arrange. Just book a meeting with the **Head of Student Support** (Tracy@voicestudycentre.com), who will guide you through the process and make sure everything is updated smoothly.

6.11: Thinking of Leaving or Taking a Break?

We know that sometimes life gets complicated, and you might need to pause or reconsider your studies. Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, unwell, or unsure, we're here to support you.

Taking a Break (Intermission)

If you need a short break from your course, you can apply for an intermission. This is a temporary pause in your studies not a long-term leave and is designed to help you get back on track without losing momentum.

- **Short-Term Only:** Intermissions are intended to be brief. If you're in your first year and need more than two terms off, you may need to restart your course.
- **Health-Related Breaks:** If you're unwell, we'll ask for medical evidence to support your request.
- **Fees:** Your tuition fees depend on when you take your break. For further details, please consult our [Intermission policy](#) and our intermission [fee policy](#)

To apply for intermission, contact our Head of Student Support, Tracy Theobald, who will assist you in completing the paperwork.

Leaving Your Course (Withdrawal)

If you decide to leave your course permanently, we'll guide you through the process and make sure you understand your options.

- **Talk to Us First:** Speak with the Head of Student Support before making a final decision.
- **Formal Process:** You'll need to complete a withdrawal form, which includes your last date of attendance and reason for leaving.
- **Fees Liability** Please be aware of your fee liability. Information regarding fees is contained within your [terms and conditions](#). You may also wish to consult the tuition [fee payment and liability policy](#). If you are experiencing financial difficulties then please consult our [vulnerable consumers policy](#).

Academic Skills

7.1 Three-week academic skill-building intensive

Introduction to Postgraduate Academic Skills (Pre-Course)

Before your MA officially begins, you'll take part in our three-week pre-course called *Introduction to Postgraduate Academic Skills*. This is an expected part of your programme, designed to help you feel confident and prepared for postgraduate study.

When and How?

- Delivered online over three weeks, before the main course starts.
- Includes a mix of live sessions, independent study, and guided activities.
- You'll complete around 20 hours of contact time and 15 hours of self-guided learning.

What You'll Learn

This course helps you build the academic skills you'll need to succeed:

- Using the online library and digital tools.

- Academic referencing and managing sources.
- Reading and evaluating research articles.
- Understanding plagiarism and academic integrity.
- Writing in different styles, formal, reflective, and critical.
- Developing your own academic voice.

Assessment & Feedback

- You'll complete two short, formative assignments designed to help you practise academic writing.
- These are not graded, but you'll receive written feedback on your writing style to help you improve and feel confident moving forward.

7.2 University of Essex academic support resources

The University of Essex offers a range of additional resources:

- How to improve your [academic writing](#)
- Introduction to [referencing workshop](#)
- [How to reference and test your referencing skills](#)

7.3 One-to-One Support for Learning Needs

We're committed to supporting every student's learning journey—especially if you have additional needs or face challenges that affect how you study. Our support system is designed to be flexible, compassionate, and tailored to you.

DO-IT Assessment: Understanding Your Learning Profile

We use the **DO-IT Profiler**, a trusted online screening tool, to help identify learning needs such as:

- Dyslexia
- ADHD
- Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC)
- Dyspraxia/DCD
- Dyscalculia
- Social and communication challenges

The profiler also highlights study skills gaps and suggests personalised strategies for both university and home life. It's not a test; it's a way to understand how you learn best.

What Happens After the Assessment?

If the DO-IT assessment shows that you may benefit from extra support, we'll work with you to create a personalised plan. This may include:

- **Specialist Mentoring** (minimum 6 hours per student)
- Help with stress, motivation, organisation, and study patterns
- Emotional support and counselling (including access to a 24-hour helpline)
- Technical support for using Canvas and other learning platforms

You'll also have regular **check-ins** with our Head of Student Support. These can happen via Teams, Zoom, or phone whichever works best for you. You can choose whether to have your camera on or off, and whether the session is recorded.

8. Assessment and Academic Integrity

8.1 Rules of Assessment

The Rules of Assessment explain how your work is marked, how your progress is measured, and what you need to do to pass your course. They're designed to be fair, transparent, and supportive of your academic journey.

What Do They Cover?

- **Pass Marks:** You need to score 50 or above to pass a module. If you score between 40–49, you may still progress if the mark is condoned, but you won't receive credit for that module.
- **Core Modules:** These must be passed. You cannot condone a fail in a core module.
- **Progression:** To move from Year 1 to Year 2, you must pass at least 15 credits at the first attempt, including all core modules.
- **Awards:** Your final degree can be awarded with Pass, Merit, or Distinction, depending on your overall marks.

Reassessment & Condonement

- If you don't pass a module, you may be offered a chance to resubmit or reassess; especially if you've submitted valid Extenuating Circumstances.
- Condonement allows a fail to be accepted under certain conditions, but only for non-core modules and only if your overall performance is strong.

For further details please consult the relevant rules of assessment below:

- [Full-time Taught Masters and Exit Awards](#)
- [Part-time Taught Masters and Exit Awards \(Year One\) \(2025 – 26\)](#)
- [Part-time Taught Masters and Exit Awards \(Year One\) \(2024 – 25\)](#)
- [Part-time Taught Masters and Exit Awards \(Year Two – 2025 -26\)](#)
- [Part-time Taught Masters and Exit Awards \(Year Two – 2024 -26\)](#)

8.2 Academic Integrity and Academic Offences

Academic Integrity: What It Means and Why It Matters

What Does Academic Integrity Involve?

- Using reputable sources to inform your thinking.
- Researching independently to develop your own ideas.
- Reading and note-taking to digest information thoughtfully.
- Thinking critically and combining ideas from different places to form your own interpretation.
- Writing clearly to express your understanding and opinions.
- Knowing when to collaborate and when to work independently.

What Is Academic Misconduct?

Academic misconduct includes any action that misrepresents your work or unfairly uses someone else's. Examples include:

- Plagiarism: Copying text without proper citation, quoting without page numbers, or paraphrasing without referencing.
- Collusion: Working with others on individual assignments.
- Reusing your own work: Submitting the same work for different modules.
- Making up content: Inventing research results or false references.
- Inappropriate use of AI: Copying and pasting AI-generated content. AI tools may be used for learning, but not for writing your assignments.

When You Submit Work

You're declaring that:

- Your work is your own.
- You understand the university's definition of academic integrity.
- You're aware of the consequences of academic misconduct, which can include serious disciplinary action.

For a full explanation of Academic Misconduct please view the [Academic Procedures Policy](#).

8.3 Methods of Assessment: MA Voice Pedagogy

Module 1: Foundations of Voice Pedagogy: Exploring and Evaluating the Research Literature

- **Written Assignment (100%)**
 - Part A: Evaluate theoretical perspectives and methodologies relevant to your pedagogy/practice (4,000 words)
 - Part B: Critically reflect on the impact of your learning on your pedagogical approach (2,000 words)
 - **Total:** 6,000 words
- **Reassessment:** Same form as original unless otherwise approved.

Module 2: Developing Research-Based Voice Pedagogy: Applications in Designing Tools and Resources

- **Coursework Assignment (100%)**
 - Component 1: Evidence-based rationale for the design and development of a teaching tool/resource (3,000 words)
 - Component 2: Practical output (e.g., teaching tool, curriculum, digital media, etc.) with indicative 2,000 words
 - Reflective analysis on the design and future applications (1,000 words)
 - **Total:** 6,000 words
 - **Weighting:** Component 1 (50%), Component 2 (50%)
- **Reassessment:** Same form as original unless otherwise approved.

Module 3: Coaching, Mentoring and Teaching: Pedagogical Theory and Applications

- **Coursework Assignment (100%)**
 - Component 1: Critically examine relevant theories and methodologies for your practice (3,000 words)
 - Component 2: Plan and implement a teaching/coaching/mentoring session (2,000 words) and critically reflect on it (1,000 words)
 - **Total:** 6,000 words
 - **Weighting:** Component 1 (50%), Component 2 (50%)
- **Reassessment:** Same form as original unless otherwise approved.

Module 4: Research Methods: Understanding and Applying Research Methods in Voice Practice

- **Assessment:**
 - **Coursework Assignment (100%)**
 - Critically evaluate methodological approaches, research designs, methods, and ethical considerations (4,500 words)
 - Research proposal (1,500 words)
 - **Total:** 6,000 words
- **Reassessment:** Same form as original unless otherwise approved.

Module 5: Dissertation: Completing and Reporting an Original Research Project

- **Assessment:**
 - **Coursework:**
 - Component 1: Dissertation (10,000 words) – 80%
 - Component 2: Oral presentation (20 minutes) – 20%
- **Reassessment:** Same form as original unless otherwise approved

General Notes:

- All modules use coursework as the primary method of assessment, with a strong emphasis on written assignments, practical outputs, and reflective analysis.
- The dissertation module uniquely includes an oral presentation as part of the assessment.

- Reassessment strategies default to the same format as the original assessment unless special approval is granted.

8.4 Preparation of Assessments

1. Consult Regularly with Supervisors

- **Early Engagement:** Arrange initial meetings to clarify assignment expectations, discuss your ideas, and set milestones.
- **Ongoing Support:** Use one-to-one supervision sessions to refine your approach, ask questions, and address challenges as they arise.
- **Feedback:** Submit drafts or outlines to your supervisor for formative feedback, which is invaluable for improving your work before final submission.

2. Engage in Wide-Ranging Research

- **Literature Review:** Conduct thorough searches using academic databases, journals, and recommended reading lists to ensure your work is grounded in current scholarship.
- **Diverse Sources:** Draw from books, peer-reviewed articles, and relevant online resources to build a comprehensive understanding of your topic.
- **Critical Evaluation:** Don't just collect sources—critically appraise their relevance, credibility, and applicability to your assignment.

3. Build Academic Research Skills

- **Develop Search Strategies:** Learn how to use keywords, Boolean operators, and citation trails to find high-quality sources efficiently.
- **Note-Taking and Organisation:** Use digital tools (e.g., Zotero, Mendeley) to manage references and notes, making it easier to structure your arguments and cite correctly.
- **Academic Writing:** Practice structuring your work clearly, using appropriate academic conventions and referencing styles.

4. Drafting and Feedback

- **Start Early:** Begin drafting well before the deadline to allow time for reflection and revision.
- **Peer Review:** Where possible, exchange drafts with classmates for additional perspectives and constructive criticism.
- **Supervisor Feedback:** Take advantage of opportunities to submit drafts to your supervisor, incorporating their suggestions to strengthen your final submission.

5. Reflect and Apply

- **Reflective Practice:** Many assignments require a reflective component—keep a learning journal or notes on how your research and experiences are shaping your understanding and practice.
- **Application to Practice:** Consider how your findings and insights can be applied to real-world scenarios or your professional context.

6. Technical and Practical Preparation

- **Familiarise with Submission Platforms:** Ensure you know how to use the Virtual Learning Environment (e.g., Canvas) for submitting assignments and accessing resources.
- **Accessibility:** Make use of available support materials such as lecture transcripts, recorded sessions, and accessible formats if needed.

7. Time Management

- **Plan Backwards:** Set interim deadlines for research, drafting, and revision stages.
- **Balance:** Allocate time for reading, writing, and breaks to maintain productivity and well-being.

8.5 Referencing in coursework

Referencing is a fundamental aspect of academic writing and is essential for several reasons:

1. Academic Integrity and Avoiding Plagiarism

- Referencing acknowledges the original authors of ideas, theories, data, or direct quotations you use.
- Proper citation ensures you do not present someone else's work as your own, helping you avoid plagiarism—a serious academic offence.

2. Demonstrating Research Depth

- Accurate referencing shows you have engaged with a wide range of credible sources.
- It demonstrates your ability to locate, evaluate, and incorporate relevant literature, strengthening the academic quality of your work.

3. Supporting Your Arguments

- References provide evidence for your claims, arguments, and conclusions.
- Citing authoritative sources lends credibility and weight to your analysis.

4. Enabling Verification and Further Reading

- Referencing allows readers (including tutors and peers) to trace your sources, verify your information, and explore topics further.
- It contributes to the transparency and reliability of your academic work.

5. Academic Conventions and Professionalism

- Following a consistent referencing style (such as Harvard, APA, or MLA) is part of academic professionalism.
- It reflects your attention to detail and your understanding of scholarly conventions.

6. Contributing to the Academic Community

- By referencing, you participate in the ongoing scholarly conversation, giving credit to previous researchers and enabling others to build on your work.

In summary:

Referencing is not just a technical requirement but a cornerstone of ethical, credible, and high-quality academic writing. It underpins the trustworthiness of your work and is a skill that will serve you throughout your academic and professional career.

8.6 Submission of Coursework

Submitting your coursework through the Canvas portal is a crucial part of your academic journey. Here's how to approach the process effectively:

1. Familiarise Yourself with Canvas

- **Navigation:** Log in early and explore the Canvas interface to locate your modules, assignment submission areas, and relevant resources.
- **Guidance:** Review any module-specific instructions or video guides on how to upload assignments, check file formats, and confirm successful submission.

2. Prepare Your Work for Submission

- **Formatting:** Ensure your assignment meets all formatting requirements (file type, word count, referencing style).
- **Final Checks:** Proofread your work, check for completeness, and ensure all required documents (e.g., cover sheets, appendices) are included.

3. Submission Process

- **Upload:** Use the designated submission link in your module's Canvas page. Follow prompts to upload your file(s).
- **Confirmation:** Always check for a confirmation message or email to verify your submission was successful. Save this confirmation for your records.

4. Meeting Deadlines

- **Plan Ahead:** Note all assignment deadlines in your calendar and set reminders. Aim to submit at least a day before the deadline to avoid last-minute technical issues.
- **Late Submissions:** Be aware of VSC's policy on late submissions; late work may incur penalties or not be accepted without an approved extension.
- **Technical Issues:** If you encounter technical problems, contact your module leader or IT support immediately and document your issue.

5. After Submission

- **Check Feedback:** Once marked, return to Canvas to review feedback and grades. Use this feedback to improve future assignments.
- **Keep Copies:** Always retain a copy of your submitted work and confirmation receipt until the end of the academic year.

8.7. Problems with Canvas

If you experience any technical difficulties when submitting your coursework via the Canvas portal, such as upload errors, access issues, or system outages, it is important to act promptly to ensure your work is still received on time.

What to do:

1. Contact the Technical Team:

- Email Peter at: Peter@voicestudycentre.com
- Clearly describe the issue you are experiencing and include any relevant screenshots or error messages if possible.

2. Send Your Assignment to Tracy Theobald:

- As a precaution, immediately email a copy of your completed assignment to Tracy Theobald at: Tracy@voicestudycentre.com
- This ensures there is a record of your submission while the technical issue is being resolved.

3. Document the Problem:

- Keep a record of your communications and any error messages you receive. This will help in resolving the issue and verifying your attempt to submit on time.

Remember:

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your work. Early submission allows time to

address any unforeseen technical problems and ensures your assignment is received by the deadline.

If you need further support, your module leader or supervisor can also provide guidance.

8.8 Late Submission of Coursework and Extenuating Circumstances

Please consult the University of Essex, [Late Submission of Coursework policy](#). The policy states that all assessments submitted after the deadline will receive a mark of zero, unless there are valid circumstances resulting in your late submission. There may be times when you are unable to undertake, complete or submit a piece of coursework or an online examination on time due to circumstances beyond your control. You can still submit work late if you have submitted a valid late submission claim alongside evidence of your circumstances. Where work is late you will need to submit an EC form. Please consult our [extenuating circumstances policy](#).

Support for Extenuating Circumstances

If you are facing personal, medical, or other significant challenges that may impact your ability to complete coursework on time, it's important to know that support is available.

Contact Tracy Theobald as soon as possible if you believe you may need to apply for extenuating circumstances. Tracy will guide you through the process, explain what documentation may be required, and ensure you understand your options. Reaching out early helps ensure you receive the support you need and that your situation is handled with care and confidentiality.

Remember, you are not alone; support is available, and the team is committed to helping you succeed even in difficult circumstances.

8.9. Dissertation Extensions

Postgraduate taught dissertations or equivalent are not counted as coursework and are therefore not covered by the policy on the late submission of coursework. Students can request an informal extension of up to four weeks from the Department/School. Students can also request a longer extension from the relevant Deputy Dean (Education) to submit their dissertation if they find that, due to extenuating circumstances, they will be unable to submit the dissertation by the published deadline. For verification, please consult the [Late Submission of Coursework Policy](#)

9. Ethics in Research

9.1 The Ethics Framework

Ethical practice is a cornerstone of all research activity. As a student engaged in research, you are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity, responsibility, and respect for

others. This includes ensuring that your work is conducted in a manner that is honest, transparent, and considerate of the rights and welfare of all participants and stakeholders.

Core Principles

All research undertaken within this programme should align with the following ethical principles:

- **Respect for Persons:** Treat all participants with dignity, ensuring informed consent is obtained and maintained throughout the research process.
- **Beneficence and Non-Maleficence:** Aim to maximise potential benefits and minimise any possible harm to participants, communities, or the environment.
- **Justice:** Ensure fair treatment and equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens of research.
- **Integrity:** Maintain honesty and transparency in data collection, analysis, reporting, and publication.
- **Confidentiality:** Protect the privacy of individuals and the confidentiality of data at all stages of the research.

Your Responsibilities

As a researcher, you are responsible for:

- Submitting your research proposal for ethical review and approval before commencing data collection.
- Following approved protocols and reporting any deviations or concerns to your supervisor or ethics committee.
- Ensuring that all participants are fully informed about the nature of the research and their rights.
- Maintaining accurate records and securely storing data in accordance with data protection regulations.

Ethical Review Process

All research involving human participants, sensitive data, or potential ethical risks must undergo formal ethical review. This process ensures that your project meets institutional and legal standards, providing guidance to help you navigate complex ethical issues.

Details of the ethical review process, including submission forms, timelines, and contact points, are available in the [Research Ethics Framework](#).

10. Assessment and Marking

10.1 Moderation and Double Marking

The [Voice Study Centre \(VSC\) marking policy](#) is fully aligned with the [University of Essex Marking Policy](#) and is reviewed annually to ensure continued consistency. Any changes to coursework or assessment methods are reflected in this policy.

Types of Assessment

- Summative Assessment: Contributes to a module mark, award mark, degree classification, or professional requirements.
- Formative Assessment: May receive a mark but does not contribute to module or award marks.

Marking Methods

Double Marking (Highlighted Practice)

All summative coursework at VSC is double marked. This means that two markers independently assess each piece of work without access to each other's marks or comments. After both have completed their marking, they must reconcile their marks through discussion. The aim is to reach an agreed mark based on professional judgement, not by simply averaging the two marks. Departments are required to keep a full record of both individual and agreed marks for all double-marked work.

- If the two markers cannot agree, a third marker may be appointed to arbitrate. Only in exceptional cases will work be referred to an External Examiner, who will be provided with all relevant internal comments.
- For coursework worth 30 credits or more, double marking is mandatory.
- Performance-based assessments (including oral presentations) must be double marked, team marked, recorded, or attended by the external examiner to ensure 100% coverage.

Second Marking

In some cases, a second marker may review the work with access to the first marker's comments. Marks must still be reconciled, and records kept.

Single Marking

Single marking (by one individual) is only permitted for formative assignments and is not allowed for summative coursework at VSC.

Moderation

Moderation is a separate process from marking. A moderator reviews a sample of marked work to ensure assessment criteria have been applied consistently. Moderation is not required where double marking has taken place, unless for staff development purposes.

Anonymous Marking

- All summative coursework should be marked anonymously where practical.
- If anonymity is not possible, students will be informed in advance.
- Anonymity is maintained until marks are released, including during double marking or moderation.

Requests for a Remark

Students may only request a remark if their work was single marked (formative assignments only). For all summative work, which is double marked, remark requests are only considered in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Director of Studies.

Use of External Markers and Examiners

- All work is marked by VSC staff. External markers, if used, must be experienced and approved by Essex University.
- The External Examiner acts as a moderator, not a second marker, and reviews a sample of work to ensure consistency.

Release of Marks

- Provisional marks may be released after all marking and moderation processes are complete.
- Final marks are released after review by the External Examiner and confirmation by the exam board.

10.2 The Role of the External Examiner

External Examiners play a vital role in maintaining the integrity and consistency of assessment standards at the Voice Study Centre (VSC). Their involvement ensures that marking practices align with institutional expectations and sector-wide benchmarks.

Moderation and Oversight

The primary function of the External Examiner is to act as a **moderator**, not a second marker. They provide an independent overview of the marking process, focusing on the **overall consistency and fairness** of assessment across modules rather than the marks awarded to individual students.

- External Examiners are sent a **minimum of 10% of student work** across all classifications, including fails.
- If the cohort is fewer than ten students, **all student work** is reviewed.
- Samples must include the **full range of assessed work**, such as dissertations and examination scripts, and should reflect the module aggregate unless specific assessment rules require students to pass all components.

Arbitration in Exceptional Circumstances

In rare cases where internal markers cannot agree on a final mark—even after involving a third marker—the External Examiner may be asked to **arbitrate**. This only occurs in **exceptional circumstances**, and the Examiner must be provided with all relevant internal comments to inform their decision.

- The External Examiner’s role in arbitration is strictly limited to resolving disputes and does not extend to routine marking.
- Departments must make every effort to resolve disagreements internally before escalating to the External Examiner.

Limitations of Authority

External Examiners **do not alter individual student marks**. Their feedback is used to inform broader decisions about marking standards and may lead to adjustments across a module if inconsistencies are identified.

10.3 VSC External Examiner

Dr Hannah Fahey de Brún is an Associate Professor and Course Director of the BA in Voice at the [University of Limerick](#). She is based at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, where she teaches and researches in the fields of vocal pedagogy, voice studies, and performance studies.

Research Interests

- Contemporary vocal pedagogy
- Teaching singing online
- Vocal acoustics and anatomy
- Social singing and wellbeing
- Stylistic pluralism and genre-specific pedagogy

She has contributed to peer-reviewed publications including:

- *Health Promotion International* on social singing and health [\[scholar.google.com\]](https://scholar.google.com/)

- *International Journal of Music Education* on stylistic pluralism in vocal training
[\[limerick.a...ademia.edu\]](http://limerick.a...ademia.edu)
- A recent [scoping review](https://www.medrxiv.org) on psychosocial risk factors for injury in performing artists
[\[medrxiv.org\]](https://www.medrxiv.org)

Artistic Work

Dr Fahey de Brún is also a composer and performer, having created original music for film, radio, aerial dance, and theatre. She has directed numerous choral ensembles including:

- Cantoral (medieval vocal ensemble)
- Sionna
- Limerick Gospel Choir
- Sonas: The UL Global Choir

10.4 Academic Appeals

At our institution, we are committed to fairness and transparency in all assessment processes. All postgraduate work is double marked, ensuring that your achievements are evaluated with the utmost care and impartiality.

If you believe a formal decision about your progress or qualification such as your final mark or the outcome of an extenuating circumstances claim needs to be reviewed, you have the right to appeal. Here's how the process works:

Can I Appeal Against My Marks?

You cannot appeal simply because you disagree with a mark or grade, or with the academic judgment of the examiners. The appeals process is not designed for challenging academic judgment. Coursework and examinations cannot be remarked except in cases where there is evidence of a procedural irregularity or bias/prejudice in the marking process.

Valid grounds for appeal include:

- Extenuating circumstances that were not previously available to the Board of Examiners and might have affected the outcome.
- New evidence for previously disclosed extenuating circumstances, which for good reason was not available at the time.
- The Board of Examiners did not follow University procedures, disadvantaging the student.
- Evidence of prejudice or bias during the consideration of your progress.

If you have concerns about your mark, you are encouraged to discuss it with your department first. If you believe there has been a procedural error or bias, you may request a formal re-mark or submit an appeal, but you must provide clear grounds and evidence for this.

How to Submit an Appeal

- Appeals must be submitted within ten working days of the decision you wish to challenge.
- Use the official Appeal Form and include all relevant evidence.
- Late appeals are only considered in exceptional circumstances, with supporting evidence.

What Happens Next?

- Your appeal will be acknowledged within five working days.
- The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will review your case to ensure it meets the grounds for appeal.
- If your appeal is valid, it will be considered fully, and you may be asked for further information.
- If your appeal is not upheld, you will receive a written explanation and information about further review options.

For further detail please consult the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#) and download the Academic Appeals form [here](#)

10.5 Feedback

Feedback on your academic work is a vital part of your learning journey. At our institution, we believe that effective feedback not only helps you understand your marks, but also supports your growth and success in future assignments.

Types of Feedback

Feedback can take many forms, depending on your subject and the nature of your assignment. You might receive:

- Individual face-to-face verbal feedback
- Written comments on essay cover sheets
- Electronic feedback (such as text files or audio files)

Your department may have its own specific approach, but all feedback is designed to help you progress.

Key Principles of Feedback

- **Timely:** You can expect your marked work and feedback within 20 working days. If there's a delay, you'll be informed and given a new date.
- **Clear Criteria:** Feedback will explain how your work was marked, referring to the learning outcomes and marking scheme, so you understand the reasons behind your grade.
- **Constructive:** Feedback will highlight what you did well, what could be improved, and how you can achieve higher marks in the future.
- **Legible and Understandable:** All feedback will be clear, easy to read, and written in appropriate language.

Discussing Your Feedback

If you'd like to talk about your feedback, you're encouraged to request a discussion with your tutor or marker. This can help clarify comments and support your development.

Timing and Reflection

Feedback is most useful when you can apply it to future work. That's why assessment deadlines are organised so you receive feedback in time to use it for your next assignment. Early assessments in each module also provide feedback to help you get support if needed.

Continuous Improvement

Your feedback experience matters. Student Voice Groups regularly discuss feedback arrangements, and the quality and timeliness of feedback are reviewed each year to ensure ongoing improvement.

For details of our feedback policy please download [here](#).

10.6 Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners at the University of Essex plays a central role in ensuring academic standards and fairness in assessment outcomes across all programmes. It is responsible for reviewing student performance, applying the University's Rules of Assessment, and determining progression, reassessment, and award decisions.

Key Functions:

- Reviewing student results and confirming module outcomes
- Applying reassessment policies, including voluntary and compulsory reassessments
- Considering extenuating circumstances and determining if reassessments should be uncapped ('First Sit')

- Ensuring fairness and consistency across departments and programmes
- Confirming awards and progression decisions, including eligibility for graduation

Reassessment Decisions:

- Students may be offered compulsory or voluntary reassessments based on their performance.
- Reassessments are typically capped at the pass mark (50), unless extenuating circumstances apply.

External Examiners: External Examiners are involved to ensure impartiality and uphold academic standards. They review assessment processes and outcomes, contributing to the integrity of the Board's decisions.

Graduation and Awards: Final decisions regarding awards and graduation eligibility are made by the Board following reassessment periods.

10.7 Publication of Results

Informal Release (Moderation Date):

Following internal moderation, provisional results are made available to students informally on the moderation date. These results are shared in good faith to support student planning and reflection, but they remain subject to confirmation by the formal Board of Examiners. Students should be aware that marks may be adjusted during the moderation and exam board process.

Formal Release (University of Essex):

At the University of Essex, formal results are published online after the Board of Examiners has ratified all marks. Students receive an email notification to their Essex email address once results are available. Due to processing volumes, results may appear at different times for students on the same course and may be published late into the evening.

Certificates and Transcripts:

Once results are confirmed, we will transfer the results to you through the post. Please ensure your address details are correct on our system.

10.8 Failure to Pass and Reassessment

If a student does not pass all required modules, the Board of Examiners at the University of Essex will review their results and determine appropriate next steps in accordance with the University's Rules of Assessment.

Reassessment Opportunities:

- Students who fail a module may be offered reassessment, which can include:
 - Resitting exams

- Resubmitting coursework
- Repeating entire modules
- Reassessments are typically capped at the pass mark (50%), unless the student has accepted extenuating circumstances, in which case an uncapped 'First Sit' may be granted.

Types of Reassessment:

- Compulsory Reassessment: Must be undertaken to progress or graduate.
- Voluntary Reassessment: Offered to improve marks but not required for progression.

Progression and Graduation:

- Students must pass all core modules and achieve the required number of credits to progress or graduate.
- **If a student fails to meet these requirements, they may:**
 - Be offered reassessment over the summer
 - Be required to repeat the year or specific modules
 - Be considered for an Exit Award (e.g., Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma)
 - Be required to withdraw from the course if reassessment attempts are exhausted

Maximum Attempts:

- Students are normally allowed three attempts at a module. Additional attempts may be granted only if extenuating circumstances are accepted by the Board of Examiners.

Support and Appeals:

- Appeals against Board decisions must be submitted within specified deadlines and under valid grounds. Refer to the Academic Appeals section of the handbook.

10.9 Postgraduate Exit Awards

If a student is unable to complete the full requirements of a taught Masters programme, the University of Essex may confer an **exit award** that reflects the credits successfully achieved. These awards are governed by the University's **Postgraduate Taught Rules of Assessment**. Please refer to these earlier in the document.

Types of Exit Awards:

1. Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip):

- **Credit Requirement:** Attempt 120 credits at Level 7 (Masters level), with at least **90 credits passed**.
- **Condonement:** Up to **30 credits** in non-core modules may be condoned if the overall weighted average is **50 or above**.
- **Core Modules:** All taught core modules must be passed.
- **Merit:** Overall weighted average of **60 or above**.
- **Distinction:** Overall weighted average of **70 or above**.

2. Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert):

- **Credit Requirement:** Attempt 60 credits at Level 7, with at least **60 credits passed**.
- **Merit:** Overall weighted average of **60 or above**.
- **Distinction:** Overall weighted average of **70 or above**.
- **Note:** Dissertation credits **cannot** be used toward a PGCert.

Important Considerations:

- Exit awards are considered when a student **cannot complete the full Masters** due to academic performance or personal circumstances.
- Students must meet the **minimum credit and module pass requirements** for the relevant award.
- **Departments specify** which modules are core and must be passed for each award.
- Students may be required to **withdraw** if further credit accumulation would not lead to any award.

11. The Virtual Learning Environment

11.1 Canvas

Canvas is the Voice Study Centre's official Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), providing a centralised platform for accessing course materials, submitting assignments, and engaging with tutors and peers.

Key Features:

- **Course Materials:** All lecture notes, reading lists, videos, and supplementary resources are uploaded to Canvas by your tutors.

- **Assignment Submission:** Coursework and assessments are submitted via Canvas, with deadlines clearly displayed.
- **Announcements:** Tutors and administrators use Canvas to communicate important updates, including changes to schedules, assessment information, and feedback.
- **Discussion Boards:** Modules may include forums for peer discussion, tutor Q&A, and collaborative learning.
- **Grades and Feedback:** Provisional grades and feedback are often released through Canvas, although the Board of Examiners confirms final marks.

Accessing Canvas:

- You will be provided with login details
- Canvas is accessible via desktop and mobile devices, with a dedicated app available for iOS and Android.

Support:

- For technical issues, contact our tech team: Peter@voicestudycentre.com
- For academic queries, reach out to your module tutor or course administrator via Canvas messaging or email.

11.2: IT Training and Canvas Support

As part of your induction, all students will receive an **introductory training session** on how to use **Canvas**, the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). This session will cover essential features, including accessing course materials, submitting assignments, viewing feedback, and navigating announcements.

If you require further assistance beyond the initial training, you are welcome to schedule **one-to-one support** with our **technical support team (Peter@voicestudycentre.com)**. These personalised sessions are designed to help you build confidence in using Canvas and other digital tools essential to your studies.

Support Includes:

- Navigating Canvas and accessing modules
- Submitting assignments and viewing grades
- Using discussion boards and messaging tools
- Troubleshooting login or access issues

11.3 Online Reading Lists

To support your learning, **reading lists for core topics** are made available via **Canvas**, the VSC's Virtual Learning Environment. These curated lists include essential texts, recommended articles, and supplementary resources aligned with each module's learning outcomes.

11.4 Mode of Delivery

Mode of Delivery

The MA in Voice Pedagogy is delivered entirely online, offering a flexible and inclusive learning experience tailored to the needs of a diverse student body. The programme combines synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods to maximise accessibility, engagement, and academic rigour.

Online Learning Structure

All modules are taught via live lectures, recorded sessions, and a rich array of digital resources. Students can access materials asynchronously to accommodate varied schedules and time zones. The programme is hosted on a virtual learning environment (Canvas), which supports interactive learning through discussion boards, peer feedback, and group tutorials.

Synchronous Engagement

Live sessions are scheduled to foster real-time interaction, cohort cohesion, and active learning. These sessions include lectures, workshops, and peer-to-peer discussions, and one-to-one tutorials available on an as-needed basis.

Asynchronous Flexibility

Recorded lectures and supplementary materials are made available promptly after each session, enabling students to review the content at their own pace. This model supports learners who may have professional or personal commitments that prevent them from attending live sessions.

Inclusive Design

The programme is committed to inclusivity, with features such as transcripts, closed captions, audio versions, and accessible platforms to support neurodiverse learners and those with physical disabilities.

Pedagogical Approach

The MA comprises of five micro-projects and a final dissertation. It encourages critical engagement with current research, reflective practice, and the development of innovative pedagogical tools. Students are supported through one-to-one supervision, group tutorials, and mentoring.

11.5 Your Information and Data Protection

The Voice Study Centre is committed to safeguarding personal data and ensuring compliance with the [UK General Data Protection Regulation \(UK GDPR\) and the Data Protection Act 2018](#). All student information must be stored, accessed, and processed in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy, Information Security Policy, and related procedures.

Key Principles for Data Storage and Handling

1. Lawfulness, Fairness, and Transparency

Student data must be collected and processed only for legitimate purposes, with clear communication about how and why the data is used. Privacy notices must be provided at the point of data collection.

2. Purpose Limitation

Data must only be used for the specific purposes for which it was collected, unless appropriate safeguards are in place for reuse.

3. Data Minimisation

Only the minimum necessary personal data should be collected and stored.

4. Accuracy

Student records must be kept accurate and up to date. Procedures should be in place to correct inaccuracies promptly.

5. Storage Limitation

Personal data should not be retained longer than necessary. Retention schedules must be followed, and data should be securely deleted when no longer required.

6. Security, Integrity, and Confidentiality

Appropriate technical and organisational measures must be in place to protect student data from unauthorised access, loss, or destruction. This includes secure systems, access controls, and regular reviews of permissions.

7. Accountability

Staff handling student data must be trained and aware of their responsibilities. The University maintains records of processing activities and can demonstrate compliance with data protection principles.

Additional Considerations

- **Use of Cloud Services:** Any third-party cloud-based storage must be assessed for compliance with data protection legislation. Users must ensure that the service is secure and that risks are acceptable.

- **Data Subject Rights:** Students have rights under GDPR, including access to their data, rectification, erasure, and objection to processing. Requests must be handled promptly and securely.
- **International Transfers:** Transfers of student data outside the UK or EEA must comply with legal safeguards and be documented appropriately.

Compliance and Oversight

The Voice Study Centre (formally Voiceworkshop Ltd) is registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a Data Controller (Registration No.ZB443332). The Data Protection Officer (DPO) oversees compliance and guides on data protection matters.

11.6 Changes to Your Information

All students must ensure their personal information, including their postal address, email address, and contact details, remains accurate and up to date throughout their engagement with the Voice Study Centre.

Maintaining correct information ensures that students receive important communications regarding their course, certification, and any administrative matters promptly.

If any changes occur to your personal details, you must notify the Centre immediately by contacting: Tracy@voicestudycentre.com

Failure to update your information may result in missed communications or delays in certification and support services.

12: Student Voice

12.1 Student Representatives

At the Voice Study Centre (VSC), we believe that students are co-owners of their educational journey. Student Representatives (Reps) play a vital role in shaping the student experience by acting as a bridge between the student body and the Centre's leadership and academic teams.

Role and Responsibilities

Student Reps are elected by their cohort and serve for a minimum of one academic year. Each cohort will have a minimum of two and a maximum of four Reps. Their primary responsibility is to represent the collective voice of their peers, ensuring that feedback, both positive and constructive, is communicated effectively to the Centre.

Key responsibilities include:

- Gathering and organising feedback from fellow students in advance of meetings.

- Attending regular meetings with the Programme Lead and/or Head of Student Support.
- Communicating outcomes and updates back to the cohort to 'close the feedback loop'.
- Supporting the implementation of new strategies and monitoring their reception.
- Signposting peers to appropriate support services (e.g., wellbeing, academic skills) rather than providing direct advice.

Reps are not expected to resolve individual issues but should help identify whether concerns are personal or cohort-wide and direct students to the appropriate channels when necessary.

Training and Support

All Student Reps will be offered training to support them in their role. This may include internal guidance and, where possible, access to training opportunities provided by our validating partner, the University of Essex. Reps are encouraged to maintain a professional and collaborative relationship with staff, fostering a culture of mutual respect and shared responsibility.

Stepping Down or Replacement

If a Rep is unable to fulfil their duties, they should notify the Centre (via Tracy@voicestudycentre.com). A replacement will be sought to ensure continued representation. In cases where a Rep is not meeting the expectations of the role, the Centre reserves the right to appoint a new representative.

12.2 Student Feedback

At the Voice Study Centre (VSC), we are dedicated to cultivating a culture of continuous improvement through active student engagement and constructive feedback. We view feedback not only as a mechanism for quality assurance but also as a vital dialogue that shapes the learning experience for both current and future cohorts.

Why Your Feedback Matters

Your insights help us to:

- Enhance the quality and relevance of our teaching and learning materials.
- Identify areas for improvement in course delivery, assessment, and student support.
- Celebrate what is working well and replicate best practices across modules and programmes.

We value both positive and constructive feedback and encourage students to share their experiences openly and respectfully.

Formal Feedback Mechanisms

You will be invited to participate in several structured feedback opportunities throughout your studies:

- **Module Evaluation Surveys:** Conducted at the end of each module to gather anonymous feedback on content, delivery, and assessment.
- **Student/Staff Consultative Groups:** These meetings provide a platform for **Student Representatives** to present cohort-wide feedback directly to academic and support staff.
- **Postgraduate Experience Survey (PRES):** Administered to capture your overall experience at VSC at the end of your course.

All survey activities are scheduled in advance and coordinated by the Centre to ensure consistency and transparency.

Informal Feedback Channels

In addition to formal surveys, we welcome informal feedback at any time. You are encouraged to:

- Speak directly with your module leader or personal tutor.
- Contact the Head of Student Support for wellbeing-related concerns.
- She will also check in with you regularly to monitor your well-being and progress.

Acting on Feedback

We are committed to closing the feedback loop. This means:

- Acknowledging the feedback received.
- Communicating any actions taken in response.
- Explaining where changes may not be possible and why.

Recent feedback has already led to improvements in handbook clarity, module design, and student support services.

13. You Matter

13.1 Head of Student Support

The Head of Student Support at the Voice Study Centre plays a pivotal role in ensuring the well-being, inclusion, and academic success of all students. This role is currently held by Tracy Theobald, who also serves as Assistant Director and Head of Admissions.

Key Responsibilities

- **Student Welfare and Inclusion:** Leads the Centre's proactive approach to student wellbeing, with a particular focus on supporting neurodivergent students and those with complex needs. This includes encouraging early disclosure of disabilities and implementing tailored support strategies from the outset of a student's academic journey.
- **Learning Needs Assessment and Support Planning:** Oversees the use of the Do-IT Solutions profiler system to screen for neurodivergent traits (e.g., ADHD, ASC, Dyslexia) and study skills gaps. Based on these assessments, she devises personalised student support plans and coordinates the implementation of reasonable adjustments.
- **Extenuating Circumstances and Intermission:** Liaises closely with both staff and students to manage requests for extenuating circumstances, intermissions, and additional learning needs. She ensures that students are supported throughout these processes and that appropriate documentation and adjustments are in place.
- **Complaint Resolution:** Coordinates the administration and delivery of the complaints procedure, ensuring students are supported throughout and that all actions comply with the Equality Act 2010.
- **Student Engagement and Feedback:** Manages the collection and analysis of student feedback, particularly through informal channels. This informs improvements in student experience, including communication strategies, representative training, and peer support initiatives such as the Study Buddy system.
- **Collaboration and Communication:** Works closely with academic and administrative teams to ensure students receive timely and appropriate support. Liaises with the University of Essex on matters such as mitigating circumstances, intermissions, and HESA data requirements.
- **Accessibility and Flexibility:** Offers support via Zoom, Teams, or telephone, with options for camera-off or recorded sessions. Free online counselling is also available to ensure mental health support is accessible.

13.2 Support for Students with Disabilities or Additional Needs

The Voice Study Centre is committed to fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students, particularly those with additional learning needs. This commitment is embedded in both policy and practice, ensuring that students receive tailored support from the point of application through to graduation.

Early Identification and Proactive Planning

VSC encourages students to disclose any disabilities, neurodivergent traits, or complex needs during the application process. This early disclosure allows the Centre to prepare and implement appropriate support systems before the start of the course. As part of this process, students are invited to an interview to explore their needs and co-develop strategies for success.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment

A key feature of VSC's approach is the use of the Do-IT Solutions profiler system. This tool screens for neurodivergent traits such as Dyslexia, ADHD, Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), Dyspraxia/DCD, and Dyscalculia, as well as social and communication challenges. It also identifies study skills gaps and suggests personalised strategies to support learning both at university and at home.

Personalised Support Plans

Following assessment, the Head of Student Support, Tracy Theobald, devises individualised Student Support Plans. These plans outline reasonable adjustments and tailored strategies to meet each student's specific needs. Adjustments may include additional one-to-one tutorials, flexible deadlines, and access to specialist academic coaches with expertise in both voice pedagogy and learning support.

Ongoing Monitoring and Communication

Support is not static. The Head of Student Support maintains regular monthly check-ins with students and increases contact if a student becomes inactive or misses scheduled tutorials. This ensures that support remains responsive and adaptive to changing circumstances.

Accessibility and Mental Health Services

VSC offers a range of wellbeing services, including free online counselling and mental health support. Students can access these services via Zoom, Teams, or telephone, with options for camera-off or recorded sessions to accommodate different comfort levels and accessibility needs.

Legal and Institutional Alignment

All support measures are aligned with the Equality Act 2010. Students may request reasonable adjustments to academic procedures, including complaint processes, and these are considered on a case-by-case basis. The Head of Student Support coordinates the administration and delivery of these adjustments, ensuring compliance and fairness.

13.3 Counselling Services and Digital Wellbeing Support

At the Voice Study Centre, we are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students through a range of accessible, confidential, and flexible services.

24/7 Counselling Services

All students at VSC have access to free, 24/7 online counselling, delivered by fully qualified professionals through our partnership with Wellbeing Solutions. This service is available via phone or online and is tailored specifically to meet the needs of our student community. It includes:

- Immediate access to mental health support
- Confidential counselling sessions (up to six per referral)
- Wellness resources and financial guidance
- Strict adherence to privacy laws and professional ethics

To access the support:

Visit the Student Assistance Portal

Go to: <https://studentassistanceonline.org>

Use the Appropriate Access Code

- For **UK-based students**: vsc-sap
- For **International students**: vsc-i

13.4 Religion, Faith and Beliefs

The Voice Study Centre is committed to fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for students and staff of all faiths, beliefs, and worldviews. We recognise the importance of religious identity and spiritual wellbeing as integral aspects of personal and academic life.

Respect and Inclusion

VSC upholds a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, or victimisation on the grounds of religion, faith, or belief. In line with our [Student Harassment and Bullying Policy](#), all members of the Centre are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect, regardless of religious or philosophical beliefs.

We affirm the right to freedom of religion and belief, as protected under the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998. This includes the right to express religious beliefs and to observe religious practices, provided these are exercised within the law and in a manner that respects the rights and freedoms of others.

Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

VSC values academic [freedom and freedom of expression](#) as essential components of higher education. We encourage open dialogue and critical inquiry, including discussions that explore diverse religious and philosophical perspectives. However, these freedoms must be exercised responsibly and must not be used to justify hate speech, harassment, or the marginalisation of others.

13.5 Harassment Support and Guidance

Students who experience challenges related to their faith or belief, or who encounter discrimination, are encouraged to contact the Head of Student Support for confidential advice and assistance. Additional support is available through the Student Confidential service (studentconfidential@voicestudycentre.com), which offers a safe space to raise concerns.

13.6 Fitness to Practise

Fitness to Practise

The Voice Study Centre (VSC) is committed to upholding the highest standards of professional conduct and ethical behaviour among its students, particularly those enrolled in programmes that lead to professional practice. The [Fitness to Practice policy](#) ensures that students are fit to engage in their studies and, where applicable, to enter or continue in professional practice.

Purpose

The policy exists to:

- Protect the public and uphold confidence in the professions associated with VSC programmes.
- Ensure students meet the professional, ethical, and behavioural standards expected by relevant professional bodies and the University of Essex.
- Support students in addressing any concerns that may impact their ability to practise safely and effectively.

Scope

This policy applies to students whose conduct, health, or professional behaviour may raise concerns about their suitability to continue on a programme that leads to a professional qualification or registration. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Behaviour that may pose a risk to the public or to other students.
- Health conditions that may impair judgement or performance.
- Breaches of professional codes of conduct or ethical standards.

Process

Concerns about a student's fitness to practise may be raised by staff, peers, or external stakeholders. These concerns are reviewed in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Policies and Procedures Mapping Document, which ensures alignment with the University of Essex's regulatory framework.

Where appropriate, students may be referred to a Fitness to Practise Panel. The panel will consider the evidence, provide the student with an opportunity to respond, and determine whether any action is required. Outcomes may include support plans, temporary suspension, or withdrawal from the programme in serious cases.

Support and Guidance

Students undergoing a Fitness to Practise process will be supported throughout by the Head of Student Support, who can assist with wellbeing, learning needs, and access to counselling services. The process is designed to be fair, transparent, and supportive, with a focus on remediation wherever possible.

13.7 The Study and Wellbeing Intervention

The Voice Study Centre (VSC) is committed to supporting students' health, wellbeing, and academic success. The [Study and Wellbeing Intervention Policy and Procedure](#) provides a structured framework to support students when health or wellbeing concerns may be affecting their ability to study or impacting others in the learning environment.

Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled on the MA Voice Pedagogy programme. It is designed to:

- Ensure students can fully participate in their studies and achieve their academic goals.
- Provide appropriate support to students whose health or wellbeing may be affecting their academic engagement.
- Protect the wellbeing of the wider student and staff community.

- Enable staff to carry out their duties effectively in a safe and supportive environment.

When the Policy is Used

The policy may be enacted when:

- A student's health or wellbeing is affecting their ability to engage with their studies.
- A student's behaviour is impacting the wellbeing of others.
- There is a risk to the student's own health and safety or that of others.

The policy is not intended to address academic performance issues or extenuating circumstances, which are managed through separate procedures.

Stages of Intervention

The policy outlines a three-stage process, with each stage reflecting the level of concern:

- **Stage 1: Initial Support**
Triggered by low-risk or emerging concerns. An informal meeting is held to explore the issues and agree on support strategies.
- **Stage 2: Support to Study**
Initiated when concerns persist or escalate. A formal meeting is convened with the Study and Wellbeing Intervention Manager to assess the situation and develop a support plan.
- **Stage 3: Serious or Continuing Concerns**
Applied when significant or unresolved concerns remain. A Serious or Continuing Concerns Meeting is held to assess the student's fitness to study. Outcomes may include intermission or, in rare cases, withdrawal.
- **Return to Study**
Students returning from intermission will be supported through a reintegration process, including a Return to Study meeting to assess readiness and support needs.

Urgent Welfare Concerns

In exceptional cases where there is an immediate risk to the student or others, the Managing Director may authorise a temporary suspension following a risk assessment by the Head of Student Support. This is a precautionary measure pending a Stage 3 meeting.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

All personal data is handled in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Information is shared only with those who need it to provide support, and students are informed of any data sharing unless there is a legal or safety-related exception.

Appeals and External Review

Students may appeal decisions made under Stage 3 by writing to the VSC Registrar and Secretary. If unsatisfied with the outcome, students may request an external review through the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

13.8 Student Complaints

At the Voice Study Centre (VSC), we are committed to providing a high-quality educational experience and fostering a supportive learning environment. However, we recognise that there may be occasions when students feel dissatisfied with aspects of their experience. [The Student Complaints Policy](#) outlines a clear and fair process for raising and resolving such concerns.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is defined in line with the QAA Quality Code as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more students about an institution’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the institution.”

Although VSC is not a university, we operate within the university infrastructure through our partnership with the University of Essex and align our policies accordingly.

Examples of complaints may include:

- Failure by VSC to meet its obligations as outlined in the course or student handbook.
- Misleading or inaccurate information in promotional materials or prospectuses.
- Concerns about the delivery of a programme, teaching, or administration.
- Poor quality of facilities, learning resources, or services provided directly by VSC.

The Complaints Procedure

Students are encouraged to follow a staged process to resolve complaints. Skipping stages is not normally permitted unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Stage 1: Early Resolution

Students should raise concerns informally at the earliest opportunity, ideally with the person directly involved or their personal tutor. Many issues can be resolved quickly through open discussion. If the concern is more serious, it may be referred to the Head of Student Support.

Stage 2: Formal Complaint

If the issue is not resolved informally, students may submit a formal complaint in writing. This will be reviewed by a senior member of staff, and a written response will be provided following an investigation.

Stage 3: Review

If the student remains dissatisfied, they may request a review of the outcome. This will be conducted by a senior member of staff not previously involved in the case.

Stage 4: External Review

If the internal process is exhausted and the student is still dissatisfied, they may refer the matter to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) for Higher Education.

Principles of the Policy

- All complaints are handled sensitively, fairly, and without risk of disadvantage or recrimination.
- Each case is considered on its own merits, with due regard to the evidence and circumstances.
- VSC reserves the right to consolidate multiple complaints on the same issue into a single investigation.

Support

Students are encouraged to seek support from the Head of Student Support throughout the complaints process. Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with additional learning needs or disabilities to ensure equitable access to the procedure.

13.9 University of Essex Graduation Ceremony and Awards

The **Voice Study Centre (VSC)** is proud to share its graduation ceremony with the **Department of Language and Linguistics** at the University of Essex. This joint celebration reflects the close academic partnership and shared commitment to excellence in language, voice, and communication studies.

Graduation ceremonies are held at the **Colchester Campus**, typically in **Spring and Summer**, and include students from undergraduate, postgraduate, and research programmes. VSC students, many of whom study voice pedagogy, vocal health, and applied linguistics join their peers from Language and Linguistics in a formal and festive event that honours their academic achievements.

Awards and Recognition

Graduates from both VSC and the Department of Language and Linguistics may be eligible for:

- **Top Graduate Awards** in their respective programmes.
- Recognition for **dissertation excellence** in areas such as voice pedagogy, sociolinguistics, and applied phonetics.

This shared ceremony not only marks the culmination of rigorous academic study but also highlights the interdisciplinary nature of voice and language education at Essex.

14. Requesting References from Staff Members

As you prepare for employment, further study, or professional opportunities, you may wish to request a reference from a member of academic staff. Staff at the University of Essex and affiliated centres such as the **Voice Study Centre (VSC)** are often happy to support students in this way, provided certain guidelines are followed.

Guidelines for Requesting a Reference

To ensure a smooth and respectful process, please consider the following:

- **Choose an appropriate referee:** Select a staff member who knows your work well — ideally someone who has taught, supervised, or assessed you during your studies.
- **Make your request in advance:** Allow at least **2–3 weeks’ notice** before the reference is needed. This gives the referee time to prepare a thoughtful and accurate statement.
- **Provide relevant information:** Include details such as:
 - The purpose of the reference (e.g., job application, postgraduate study)
 - The deadline and submission method (e.g., online form, email, letter)
 - A copy of your CV or personal statement
 - Any specific achievements or modules you’d like highlighted
- **Be courteous and professional:** Use a polite tone in your request and express appreciation for their time and support.

Staff Discretion

Please note that staff are not obligated to provide a reference and may decline if they feel they cannot offer a meaningful or positive endorsement. This is to ensure the integrity and usefulness of the reference.

Confidentiality

References are typically treated as confidential documents and may not be shared with the student unless explicitly stated by the referee or required by the application process.

14.1 Alumni

VSC fosters ongoing engagement through a structured [alumni policy](#):

- **Networking and Mentorship:** Alumni are invited to participate in mentoring schemes, publishing workshops, and networking events to support current students and fellow graduates.
- **Recognition and Visibility:** Alumni profiles are featured on the VSC website, showcasing career achievements and promoting a sense of pride and belonging.
- **Discounts and Incentives:** Graduates receive a 20% discount on workshops and accredited courses for up to two years post-graduation.
- **Legacy Magazine:** A yearly alumni magazine highlights achievements and encourages continued engagement with VSC's offerings.

Data Management and Privacy

VSC maintains a confidential alumni database that includes biographical details, professional history, interests, and event participation records. This data is used to facilitate communication, support services, and marketing activities, in compliance with data protection legislation.