

Mathematics and statistics support for students in English universities receives funding boost

sigma, the national network for cross-university mathematics and statistics support in England, is delighted to announce the award of more than £800,000 from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to boost its vital service.

Students increasingly need quantitative skills for success on their degree courses and for many the provision of specialist mathematics support is essential to ensure fair access, retention, achievement and employability.

sigma, established in 2005, has been a driving force in the creation of university-wide centres dedicated to helping students to develop and improve mathematical and statistical skills. It is led by Professors Tony Croft from Loughborough University and Duncan Lawson from Newman University.

This new three-year funding will enable any higher education institution in England to tap into a wealth of expertise and resources that have been developed by **sigma**. The money will be used to help fund new mathematics support centres and related activities, encourage and support existing centres and practitioners, run workshops and conferences focusing on effective teaching and learning support and create new resources for practitioners and students needing mathematics support.

Overall it will ensure the network can continue to improve the university experience for thousands of students as they progress through their degree programmes.

David Bowers, Chair of the national **sigma** network and Head of Learning Development at University Campus Suffolk, welcomed the announcement.

“This renewed funding is a clear acknowledgement of the significant contribution that **sigma** has made to the provision of cross-university maths and statistics support in recent years,” he said. “Tutors working with tomorrow’s nurses, engineers, scientists and business managers to develop their essential mathematical skills will receive a huge boost.”

Chris Millward, HEFCE’s Associate Director, added: “It is clear that students across a wide range of disciplines need a mathematical fluency and competency to succeed in their university studies and in work. We are very pleased to be able to support **sigma** to continue its excellent work in spreading and enhancing maths support for students across England.”

Minister for Universities and Science, David Willetts said: “Maths skills are a pre-requisite for a wide range of jobs. **sigma** is a great scheme to broaden access to maths amongst a wide range of students, many of whom thought they had dropped Maths at 16. I am delighted HEFCE is increasing funding for **sigma**.”

The **sigma** national mathematics and statistics support activity will be led from Loughborough University’s Mathematics Education Centre, in conjunction with colleagues from Coventry and Newman Universities and members of the **sigma** network. For further information visit www.sigma-network.ac.uk.

