

Reflections on setting up a sigma supported centre

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UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Mathematics
Support Centre

PART OF THE ACADEMIC SKILLS CENTRE



What I wish I had known!*

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Background

- Established March 2012
- Drop-in Centre model
- Open afternoons – term time
- Aligned with wider institutional developments – Curriculum Review & Academic Skills Centre
- Transition focused – open to all
- ‘Owned’ & led by College of EPS
- Substantial School of Mathematics involvement
- Staffed by PGTAs



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Engagement to date

- Initial 'on the road' support:
 - Main & supplementary exams (2012): 64 visits
- Drop-in Centre:
 - 2012/13: 501 visits (163 students)
 - 2013/14: 344 visits (178 students)
 - Visits up 70% in 2013/14 compared to same period in 2012/13



Evaluation

- *"I have grown in confidence since attending the Support Centre": 77%*
- *"My mathematical skill has improved since attending the Support Centre": 82%*
- *"The maths centre has helped me for my final exams"*
- *"I have learned a lot of new maths method[s] in the maths support centre and it really helped me to improve my maths skills. I did not study A-level maths...."*

Multi-stage vision

2012

1. Delivery of interim provision
2. Drop-in support provision available
3. Online support portal available
4. Bookable statistics support
5. Electronic delivery and resources
6. Impact upon institutional practices



Points to consider

1. Be clear of your 'target audience' – what support do you need/can provide?
2. Academic 'buy in' – what links/interaction with academic schools?
3. Delivery model – who, when and how?
4. Tutors – be selective. Provide training and mentoring



Points to consider

5. Administrative support – handling tutor payments, scheduling, data capture
6. Think about the future – can you expand?
7. Getting started – begin early. Lead-in time can be significant
8. Get some activity underway as soon as possible.

Points to consider

9. Raising awareness takes time: Staff and students. Development of promotional materials & website, developing a visible profile, the role of students as ambassadors
10. Provide stakeholder reports and updates
11. Senior level-buy is essential: Role of an institutional champion
12. Mainstreaming: Embedding your Centre as part of institutional practice/business



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Questions & Discussion

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