

Josta Heyligers' journey as a learning advisor

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It all began in 1985 when I started as a tutor at the University of Auckland (UOA), and I became a learning advisor and coordinator for what would soon be called the Student Learning Unit. My role evolved, and soon I found myself balancing a .7 contract as a learning advisor at UOA with a .5 contract as a psychology lecturer at Auckland Institute of Technology (later known as AUT).

In 1992, I embarked on a sailing voyage that would take me halfway around the world, from Auckland to Amsterdam. This break from academia allowed me to return with renewed energy. By 1994, I was back at UOA, working full-time as a learning advisor at the newly renamed Student Learning Centre. Concurrently, I was seconded .5 time to UOA's School of Psychology, where I had the opportunity to teach Social Psychology for a full academic year.

One of my memorable initiatives was starting the Language Exchange programme in 1991, a platform designed to foster language learning and cultural exchange among students. I further coordinated SLC activities at the then-new Tamaki Campus, before eventually returning to the main city campus when the SLC became part of the UOA Library.

Throughout my career, my passion for helping students succeed and enjoy their studies has been a constant driving force. This dedication led me to pursue a doctoral thesis on the history and evolution of universities and the challenges of providing student learning support at UOA, and I graduated in 2005.

In early 2019, I made a significant move by crossing the road to join AUT. This transition felt like a homecoming, bringing my journey full circle while allowing me to learn and grow

even more in the process of (co-)designing and teaching a wide range of writing and academic skills to research students.

The future of LA work? Gen AI got my interest, but participating in MS365 and its Copilot features, trying out Copilot in SciSpace, I am aware that there is still a long road to travel. It is in its infancy making mistakes, giving wrong information and for the time being very helpful for generating ideas and getting started. The good thing is that critical thinking is still key and an important skill to develop in a GenAI world.

For now, in my free time, I enjoy playing 'klaverjassen' (a Dutch card game) virtually but prefer to play it with actual opponents in the 'real' world. I further love travelling in the 'real' world, especially visiting my family in The Netherlands (soothing my conscience with buying carbon credits). My partner introduced me to motorcycle rides which have proven to be a good substitute for sailing :-) even though it's using fuel.