Support for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for non-Native Speakers: Matching Needs and Provision

**Title:** Support for English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for non-Native Speakers: Matching Needs and Provision

**Project Leader:** Alice Jenkins (English Literature/School of Critical Studies), for the Writing Centre Advisory Board

**Other contributors:** Gayle Pringle Barnes (College International Student Learning Officer/College of Social Sciences)

**Contact details:** alice.jenkins@gla.ac.uk / 5699

**Summary**

Over the past three years, members of the Writing Centre Advisory Board have frequently reported widespread concern in all areas of the University about the difficulties faced by students who are not native speakers of English, and by staff teaching them and assessing their work. Concerns address both academic and social issues, including:

- comprehension of spoken English in lectures and tutorials
- ability to contribute orally to tutorials and seminars
- ability to express knowledge and ideas clearly in written assessments
- Student Discipline cases resulting from problems engaging in assessment
- ability to integrate with the wider student community.

The ISB indicates that levels of satisfaction with language support in GU (88% in 2013-14 ISB) are comparable with averages in Scottish and UK HEIs (88%), though satisfaction with academics’ English is slightly lower than elsewhere (90% in GU; 93% average in Scotland and UK).

Despite this heartening feedback, evidence from staff and students across the University indicates that there is confusion about what EAP support is available, and a belief among many at all levels of the University that demand greatly outstrips provision at present.

This project seeks to provide comprehensive information on student and staff views about EAP support for non-native speakers of English, in three dimensions:

- Current provision
- Current need
- Future need

It is of course for SMG, informed by the University LTC and EdPSC, to decide the shape of future provision in this area, but the project aims to provide solid information on which such decisions can be based.

This project is the largest consultation exercise on Academic English to be undertaken at the University. It is a response to the University Learning and Teaching Committee, which at a meeting on 14 January 2015, asked the Writing Centre Advisory Board to prepare an LTDF bid for a project on the subject. The project is aligned with Aims 1 (culturally diverse supportive atmosphere) and 7 (promoting student engagement and success) of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.
Aims

- To gain a clear picture of the opportunities currently available to international students at GU who are non-native speakers of English to gain pre-sessional and in-session support for English for Academic Purposes (both written and oral)
- To gain a clear picture of why students do, and do not, take up the opportunities available
- To gain information on different patterns of take-up of provision across cohorts, nationalities and disciplines
- To understand both students’ and staff views of the effectiveness of current opportunities for EAP support, and their views of desirable levels, sources and kinds of support
- To gain a clear picture of the support available in a range of competitor institutions in Scotland and the UK
- To gain a clear picture of management views about academic English support as part of the GU Learning and Teaching and Internationalisation strategies.

Outcomes

- A report to be submitted to the University Learning and Teaching Committee presenting and analysing the information outlined above and suggesting possible strategic planning for EAP support for non-native speakers.

Previous Work

Research has identified concerns over English language levels as a source of considerable anxiety for many international students (Brown, 2008). Students report that they can experience challenges in their academic work, including understanding and participating in classes and with writing assessed work (Andrade, 2006; Brown, 2008; Chang and Strauss, 2010). Studies into staff views of international students also focus on perceived difficulties with English (Daniels, 2013). Moreover, students’ opportunities to use English outside the classroom may also be limited (Brown, 2008; Andrade, 2006). Despite these obstacles, however, such studies also find students demonstrating considerable personal agency in addressing these challenges (Brown, 2008; Chang and Strauss, 2010).


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Student Engagement

Students will be involved throughout the project, both as research participants and as members of the project team. A PGR student will be recruited to act as RA, while 4 further project interns will also be involved in planning and conducting interviews.

Methodology

The research will be carried out using a combination of surveys, interviews and web searching. Additionally, the University community as a whole will be invited to submit views or experiences via an email box.

The work will be conducted by three groups of participants:

1. Alice Jenkins and Gayle Pringle Barnes will:
   a. direct and manage the project
   b. conduct interviews with line managers and colleagues in University Services (including RIO, Disability Services, the Student Learning Service)
   c. write the final report
   d. present on the report within the University as requested

2. The RA (0.5 FTE for 7 months) will
   a. conduct interviews with teaching and administrative staff using a template designed by Jenkins and Barnes, with input from the RA and student interviewers
   b. analyse the data produced by student interviewers
   c. conduct web-based research on support offered by competitor institutions in Scotland and the UK
   d. collate and present all the information gathered by the project in a set of appendices to the main report

3. A team of 4 student interviewers (either final year Honours students or PGR students) will
   a. Conduct interviews with UG and PGT students using a template designed by Jenkins and Barnes, with input from student interviewers and RA.

Stakeholders to be represented in interviews:

- UG, PGT and PGR students in all four Colleges
- Teaching staff in all four Colleges both in Glasgow and Crichton
- English as a Foreign Language Unit
- SRC, including the Student Volunteer Support Service
- Staff and students at Glasgow International College
- University Services, including Learning and Teaching Centre, Writing Centre, RIO, Chaplaincy, Counselling Service

Potential Applicability / Transferability

This project will seek to include input from, and produce a report which is applicable to, all four Colleges.

Evaluation
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The project results in a report to the University Learning and Teaching Committee. Accordingly, its primary evaluation will be via that Committee’s view of its usefulness as a source of information and a tool for future planning for Academic English provision for non-native speakers of English. The project leader would be delighted to give an interim report to the Learning and Teaching Committee mid-way through the project, if that were felt to be helpful.

Timetable

2015
- September-October: Recruit and train RA and student interviewers; prepare templates for interviews
- October-December: Conduct interviews with staff, line managers, University Services colleagues, and students
- October-December: Conduct web research on support offered by competitor institutions

2016
- January: Collate data and start analysis
- February-April: Write report and prepare data for appendices
- May: present report to Learning and Teaching Committee

Budget

Alice Jenkins and Gayle Pringle Barnes will each contribute c. 8 days’ work to the project. This will be considered part of their normal duties.

RA: a PGR student; ideally will be a non-native speaker of English
Grade 6 (bottom of scale), 7 months, 0.5 FTE
Employers’ costs: £1,820.29
Total: £9,711.91

Student interviewers: either Senior Honours or PGR students; ideally will be non-native speakers of English
Stipend: £300 for conducting c. 25 interviews each
Total: £1,200

Total: £10,912

Should this application be successful, I give consent for this application to be published on the Learning and Teaching Centre website.

Signature of Project Leader:
Dear Mary,

And my approval for the other one as well. Again, excellent idea!

best,

J.

Jeremy J. Smith, Professor of English Philology and Head of the School of Critical Studies, University of Glasgow, GLASGOW G12 8QQ
Room 304, 5 University Gardens. Mail to English Language, 12 University Gardens. Telephone 0141-330 5684 (direct line), 0141-330 7450 (for appointments), 0141-330 5850 (Head of School Administration)
http://www.gla.ac.uk/schools/critical/
The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

From: Alice Jenkins
Sent: 16 April 2015 23:36
To: Jeremy Smith
Subject: Fwd: LTDF bid: Support for English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Dear Jeremy,

Here is the other LTDF bid, as discussed. If you could possibly drop Mary Ramsay a one line email to approve it, I'd be enormously grateful! So sorry to add to your load when you've just got back.

Very many thanks indeed, and all best,

Alice

Sent from my iPad