

Teaching EAP to lower level learners: Adapting to Change: Challenge or Opportunity ?

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Outline

- Pre-sessional Programmes at Surrey
- Changes in EAP
- Consequences of Change
- Challenges for the EAP Course Director, tutor and student
- Meeting the Challenges
- Challenge or Opportunity?

Pre-sessional Programmes at Surrey

Summer Programme

Pre-sessional 10 (IELTS 5.5/6.0+)
can form part of conditional offer

Pre-sessional 7 (IELTS 5.0 +-haven't met conditions of offer)

Pre-sessional 4 (unconditional offer – have already met English
language requirements)

English for University Study (10 weeks) level too low for Pre-
sessional syllabus)

Pre-sessional Programmes at Surrey

Academic Year Programme

English for University Study 1 (Semester 1)

English for University Study 2 (Semester 2.1)

English for University Study 3 (Semester 2.2)

Course Content

EAP Skills

Language and Fluency

IELTS Preparation

Projects: Group and Individual

Objective: remains the same

To enable students to cope with the demands of academic study in an English speaking medium at a higher level

Changes

Lower level students (pre-intermediate)

Longer period of EAP study

Factors Influencing change

Sponsored students

Visa terms

Internal Financial Pressures

Consequences of Change

More E in EAP

Longer, more flexible programme

Balancing needs and expectations of learner with realistic learning objectives

Retaining motivation

Ensuring appropriate language skill development in an EAP context

IELTS

Timing

Challenges for the EAP Course Designer/Manager

Motivation (danger of learner and tutor fatigue)

Balance of language skills and EAP skills

Realistic Expectations (Learner and Tutor)

Teaching Materials: variety, quality, relevance

Cyclical pathway/progression to final goal

Meeting the Challenges

Motivation: the EAP Learner

Regular tutorials (meaningful positive feedback)

Learner Diaries

Integrated monitoring/needs analysis (listen to the student)

Individualised self-study programme

Ensuring learner can clearly see the relevance of all aspects of study to long-term goals

Intellectually appropriate and stimulating materials/topics and tasks

Meeting the Challenges

Motivation: the EAP tutor

Regular staff meetings

EAP seminars

Team Teaching

Mixing up groups and levels

Shared teaching materials (shared drive/VLE)

Meeting the Challenges

Balance of language skills and EAP skills

ALL educational delivery is founded on the precept of sound and continuous needs analysis

ESP in particular focuses on the learner's specific needs and goals

Therefore all language development should take place within the context of these needs and goals

The concept of “switching” suddenly from general to Academic English contradicts these assumptions

The “academic” approach needs to be built in as early as possible

Greater focus on reading, writing, critical thinking and independent study at lower levels

Meeting the Challenges

Realistic Expectations: Learner

Pre-course information

Quick identification of unrealistic timeframe (IELTS)

Counselling through tutorials

Awareness of relevance of all aspects of course to their long term academic goal

Meeting the Challenges

Realistic Expectations (Tutor)

“They can’t do it – they’re too low level”

“I don’t think we should ask them to do an individual project (assignment) because they just can’t”

“What’s the point of projects when they just plagiarise everything”

“Let’s stop them using the internet at all to research projects because they’re just cutting and pasting”

Meeting the Challenges

Realistic Expectations (Tutor)

- **In-sessional or pre-sessional approach ?**
- **Process vs product**
- **Tutor induction**
- **Tutor support through meetings/seminars/workshops**
- **Team Teaching**
- **Peer observation**
- **Group marking/correction**

Meeting the Challenge

**Teaching Methodology/Materials:
variety, quality, relevance**

Adult topics

Projects

Learner ownership of tasks

Meaningful Tasks

Independent Study tasks

Student generated resources

Shared resources

Group Work/mixed levels

Meeting the Challenge

Cyclical pathway/progression to final goal

Recycling and consolidation

Clear progression in terms of difficulty through the programme

(reflected through syllabus, materials and assessment)

Meeting the Challenge

e.g. Project

Poster Presentation (Group)

Semi-controlled Project (Group)

Semi-controlled Individual Project + Presentation

**Individual Assignment and Seminar Presentation
(related to future academic degree programme)**

Challenge or Opportunity ?

It is pedagogically sound and appropriate for the EAP student to develop their English language skills within an EAP context at lower levels and if managed and taught effectively, tutors and students can reap the rewards of teaching and learning within an EAP context at a lower English language level.