

Good Practice Principles for English language proficiency for international students in Australian universities

Introduction

The project

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has funded a project to develop a set of good practice principles for English language proficiency in academic studies.

This project's focus is international students studying in universities in Australia. However the Principles can be applied more generally to learning and teaching of all higher education students and they can be used by other post-secondary educational institutions.

The project has been undertaken by a Steering Committee convened by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA). A list of Steering Committee members is given on the last page of this document.

The project is a quality enhancement activity for the Australian university sector and reflects extensive work being undertaken in many Australian universities. It builds on the outcomes of a 2007 National Symposium commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training. (The outcomes from this Symposium, and the evidence-based background papers that informed discussions at the Symposium, are available from the Australian Education International website at www.aei.dest.gov.au.)

Definition of English language proficiency

For this project, 'English language proficiency' has been defined as the ability of students to use the English language to make and communicate meaning in spoken and written contexts while completing their university studies. Such uses may range from a simple task such as discussing work with fellow students, to complex tasks such as writing an academic paper or delivering a speech to a professional audience. This view of proficiency as the ability to organise language to carry out a variety of communication tasks distinguishes the use of 'English language proficiency' from a narrow focus on language as a formal system concerned only with correct use of grammar and sentence structure. The project Steering Committee recognises that in many contexts the terms 'English language proficiency' and 'English language competence' are used interchangeably.

Context

English language proficiency has become an important issue in Australian higher education due in part to a heightened awareness of the role of English language ability in employment outcomes and the role of international graduates in meeting skill shortages in the Australian workforce. There is also an increased recognition within universities of the fundamental nature of language in learning and academic achievement for all students.

The rapid progress of global higher education is prompting universities in other countries to address the complex issues of learning and teaching in multilingual environments. Given the current prevalence of English in work and professional fields internationally, many universities are seeking better ways for students whose first language is not English to develop their disciplinary English language proficiency through academic studies.

For the retention and academic success of international students in Australian universities, a range of skills and strategies (in particular, written and oral communication) need to be made visible, explicit, and accessible and, importantly, integrated within specific disciplinary contexts. The Good Practice Principles are one way to demonstrate the commitment and leadership of Australian universities in the area of English language proficiency for international students with English as an additional language.

While attending to university entry requirements, the Steering Committee has emphasised the development of English language proficiency throughout students' studies. In doing so, the Steering Committee has been guided by a number of key ideas, as follows:

- With widening participation across tertiary education and the increasing numbers of international students, it can no longer be assumed that students enter their university study with the level of academic language proficiency required to participate effectively in their studies.
- Irrespective of the English language entry requirements of the university, most students, in particular those from language backgrounds other than English, will require English language development throughout the course of their studies.
- Different disciplines have different discourses of academic inquiry.
- Students' English language proficiency can be developed through appropriate course design, supplemented where necessary by other developmental activity.
- Development of academic language and learning is more likely to occur when it is linked to need (e.g. academic activities, assessment tasks).
- English language proficiency is one part of the wider graduate attribute agenda since English language communication skills are crucial for graduate employment.

How will the Good Practice Principles be used?

The Good Practice Principles have been developed in consultation with Australian universities and other stakeholders. They aim to describe what is known about current good practice, taking into account the diversity of Australian universities.

The Principles are general statements for individual universities to address in the context of their own operations and environment.

As one university stated in its response to the consultation draft: 'Because the missions, pedagogical approaches, and student populations at and within each university are increasingly diverse, the principles must be broad enough to allow for institutions to respond in ways appropriate to their particular situation'.

The expectation of the project Steering Committee is that universities will consider the Principles as they would consider other guidelines on good practice. As part of AUQA quality audits universities can expect to be asked about the way they have addressed the Principles, just as they are likely to be asked by AUQA auditors about their application of a range of other external reference documents for the university sector.

The examples of good practices given in the thematic guide are examples only and not intended to be prescriptive. They are provided to assist universities and other institutions in reviewing and improving their own activities.

Good Practice Principles

1. Universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies.¹
2. Resourcing for English language development is adequate to meet students' needs throughout their studies.
3. Students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university and are advised of these responsibilities prior to enrolment.
4. Universities ensure that the English language entry pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies.
5. English language proficiency and communication skills are important graduate attributes for all students.
6. Development of English language proficiency is integrated with curriculum design, assessment practices and course delivery through a variety of methods.
7. Students' English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment.
8. International students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments.
9. International students are encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through effective social interaction on and off campus.
10. Universities use evidence from a variety of sources to monitor and improve their English language development activities.

¹ For international students studying in Australia, it is a requirement of the National Code's standard 2 under the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* that 'registered providers ensure students' qualifications, experience and English language proficiency are appropriate for the course for which enrolment is sought'. This requirement is also relevant to Principle 4.

Thematic Guide with Explanation and Examples

Examples of good practices in relation to each of the 10 Principles are provided below under the following thematic areas:

1. University-wide Strategy, Policy and Resourcing
2. Prospective Students and Entry Standards
3. Curriculum Design and Delivery
4. Transition and Social and Academic Interaction
5. Quality Assurance

Theme 1: University-wide Strategy, Policy and Resourcing

Relevant Principles

Principle 1

Universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies.

Principle 2

Resourcing for English language development is adequate to meet students' needs throughout their studies.

Explanation

The first Good Practice Principle is an overarching general statement reflective of the fact that universities themselves set entry standards for admission to their courses (programs). Entry standards are designed to allow most students to graduate, if the students engage diligently with their studies. English language entry standards form part of admission criteria.

Universities also make decisions about the nature and extent of learning that students must demonstrate and therefore about the nature and extent of teaching and other learning activities to be provided. For students to be able to engage effectively in their academic studies in Australia, they must be able to communicate in English in a manner appropriate to these studies. It is assumed that academic studies in Australia necessarily involve ongoing development of students' discipline-specific English language proficiency. If some or many students are not able to participate at an appropriate level in their studies for reasons associated with their English language proficiency, a university will need to consider how to change its practices to better develop this proficiency. No university can guarantee that each and every student will participate effectively in their academic studies but every university should take responsibility for ensuring that the students it admits do not face unreasonable expectations of English language proficiency.

The second Good Practice Principle reflects the view that, having taken decisions on the extent of development of discipline-specific (and more general) English language proficiency its student population requires, a university should provide sufficient resources for development of this proficiency. A university should be able to demonstrate how resources for English language development are allocated and how it knows whether or not these resources are adequate to meet requirements. This resourcing needs to consider the needs of

research students as well as coursework students and take into account funding for data collection and analysis.

Examples of Good Practices

- The university acknowledges significant responsibility for the ongoing development of its students' English language proficiency, while recognising that students play an active role developing their proficiency during their studies.
- The university has a policy that includes its goals for the development of English language proficiency for all students.
- The university has comprehensive plans to develop and monitor students' English language proficiency throughout their studies up to the time of graduation and recognises that implementation of these plans involves a range of groups within the university.
- The university ensures there are adequate resources for qualified academic language and learning staff to assist academics to integrate language development into curricula and to provide other forms of individual and group support to students.
- The university is able to demonstrate an objective basis for the allocation of resources for English language development commensurate with need.
- The university provides professional development assistance for staff to increase their understanding of, or expertise in, the development of English language proficiency.

Theme 2: Prospective Students and Entry Standards
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Relevant Principles
Principle 3

Students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university and are advised of these responsibilities prior to enrolment.

Principle 4

Universities ensure that the English language entry pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies.

Explanation

The third Good Practice Principle reflects mutuality in development of English language proficiency. While universities have responsibilities to set entry standards and provide means for students to develop their English language proficiency during their studies, students must also take responsibility for their own language development while at university, as part of taking responsibility for their learning. It is important that students are aware of this expectation before they commit to a course of study, so universities need to advise prospective students of their responsibilities while at university. Many Australian universities have charters of student rights and responsibilities but these may need to make more explicit reference to development of English language proficiency than at present.

The fourth Good Practice Principle refers back to Principle 1 and the fact that universities are able to determine their own requirements for admission. Most universities provide for English language entry standards to be met by students through a variety of means, so many students with English as an additional language do not need to take a recognised test of English language proficiency to meet English language entry requirements. Given the practical impossibility of equating these other means with English language test scores, universities need to find other means to assure themselves that students entering through pathways (including articulation from other studies, completion of English language courses and foundation programs) are equipped to participate effectively in their studies. In practice, this means that universities need to monitor how well students from different entry pathways are able to deal with the language requirements of their discipline at various levels of study and further develop their proficiency. (Simple measures of aggregate academic performance by cohort may not provide sufficient information.) Universities need to ensure that their expectations are conveyed clearly to pathway providers. They need to manage their relationships with pathway providers effectively, including giving providers feedback on their performance and drawing attention to problems.*

**While there may be limitations on the extent to which universities feel able to change their English language admission requirements for some groups, e.g. school leavers and students articulating from vocational education and training (VET) providers, universities should make known any concerns about the English language proficiency of students admitted through these pathways.*

Examples of Good Practices

- The university provides information for prospective and admitted students about the need for further development of their English language proficiency and advises students about the ways in which this development is supported by the university.
- All students are advised of the nature and level of support that will be given to help them meet the expectations that are placed on them.
- There is clear communication of the university's expectations for further development of students' English language proficiency to onshore and offshore educational partners and agents.
- The university has formal English language entry standards that reflect the particular needs of each discipline. In setting such entry standards, the university has given consideration to international norms. The university regularly reviews its standards, taking into account external reference points, and makes changes as appropriate.
- English language entry standards are not considered in isolation but in the context of the developmental support that the university will provide, so that entry standards, the needs of the course and the support that is provided form a coherent whole.
- The university has explicit statements of the English language qualifications that it accepts as equivalent to particular test scores (e.g. IELTS, TOEFL).
- There are defined academic responsibilities for setting and reviewing entry standards.
- Staff and students understand what is signified by IELTS or TOEFL or similar language test results, including the strengths and limitations of these tests.
- The university systematically reviews the academic performance of students entering through different pathways or channels.
- The university has secure and documented processes to allow it to check and approve that entering students meet English language entry requirements, including the use of precedent databases. These processes are controlled by the university, involve more than a single individual and are subject to internal audit. Exemptions are given rarely and follow documented procedures.
- The university has clarified its expectations with direct entry pathway providers and there are formal contracts between the university and direct entry pathway providers.
- The university provides feedback to direct entry providers on the performance of student cohorts.
- The university has mechanisms to assure itself of the quality and relevance of pathway programs and the adequacy of assessment practices of pathway providers.

Theme 3: Curriculum Design and Delivery
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Relevant Principles**Principle 5**

English language proficiency and communication skills are important graduate attributes for all students.

Principle 6

Development of English language proficiency is integrated with curriculum design, assessment practices and course delivery through a variety of methods.

Principle 7

Students' English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment.

Explanation

The fifth Good Practice Principle recognises that when students graduate from an Australian university, they should possess the English language proficiency and communication skills to perform effectively in subsequent employment and professional activities and to engage in society more generally. The Principle holds equally for international students as for domestic students, especially as many graduates can expect to live and work in more than one country. This Principle is consistent with Australian universities' statements of graduate attributes, which almost without exception mention communication skills as a desired attribute, and one that research shows is crucial for employment on graduation. English language proficiency is sometimes treated as a 'taken for granted' element in communication skills. By highlighting it in this Principle, the implications for university studies become clear.

The sixth Good Practice Principle acknowledges that different disciplines have different English language requirements and discourses and that most students do not enter university with 'ready-made' proficiency in the academic language of their discipline(s). It is based on a view that development of appropriate English language proficiency is more likely to occur when it is linked to need (e.g. discipline-specific academic activities, assessment tasks, practica).

This Principle draws on expert advice, emerging practice and the available evidence on how to develop students' English language proficiency during their studies, taking account of the varying needs of students, especially students with English as an additional language. These sources indicate that while there is no single 'best' way to develop students' English language proficiency, contextualisation within disciplines and integration of language development across the curriculum seem likely to be effective approaches. 'Integration' in this context means taking a holistic view across a discipline to address needs through a variety of means, including: embedding language development through curriculum design and assessment; workshops or credit-bearing units within a course; 'adjunct' workshops or sessions within a course; developing workplace communication through preparation for work placements and practica; and targeted individual or group support provided by academic language and learning experts. Similar ideas can be applied to support research students.

The seventh Good Practice Principle recognises that, irrespective of universities' English language entry requirements, students now enter university with quite widely varying degrees of English language proficiency. Early assessment of students' English language development needs means that students and staff identify these needs at a time when they can start to be addressed, rather than at a point when the stakes are much higher. At least 18 Australian universities are now adopting or examining tools for early diagnosis of students' English language development needs. Consistent with Principle 3, this Principle also recognises that providing students with ongoing opportunities to self-assess their English language development needs encourages students to take responsibility for this development.

Examples of Good Practices

- Curricula, teaching and assessment practices are designed to develop discipline-specific English language proficiency as part of the standard learning expected within a course.
- English language proficiency and course learning outcomes are aligned.
- The university gives attention to all aspects of language proficiency in assessment methods, e.g. attention to listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- The university encourages and supports international students (and others) to undertake a diagnostic assessment of their development needs for English language proficiency at a very early stage of their studies.
- The university offers students opportunities to self-assess their language skills throughout their studies and to undertake developmental activities in response to the needs they identify.
- The university has a clear statement of the respective responsibilities of individual academics, course and unit coordinators and academic language staff for developing students' English language proficiency.
- The university ensures that academic staff know how to access professional assistance for the development of curricula, assessment tasks and teaching to develop English language proficiency.
- The curriculum takes into account time for students to develop their English language capacity within overall expected student workloads.
- The university has considered how best to use work placements or practica to assist students to develop their English language proficiency in professional or employment settings.
- The university has considered ways for domestic and international students to demonstrate their English language proficiency to prospective employers, referees and other institutions.

Theme 4: Transition and Social and Academic Interaction**Relevant Principles****Principle 8**

International students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments.

Principle 9

International students are encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through effective social interaction on and off campus.

Explanation

The eighth Good Practice Principle aims to emphasise the role that effective academic and social acculturation can play in the development of international students' English language proficiency. In particular, it is important for international students with English as an additional language to enter an environment where they have opportunities and encouragement to develop their English language skills in ways that boost their confidence and willingness to experiment with the use of language while also contributing to their socialisation to their chosen discipline. This Principle recognises the growing emphasis placed by Australian universities on transition and orientation to academic language and skills for entering students. While there are substantial orientation programs for international students entering Australian universities, these are less commonly discipline-specific and may not provide support for international students to plan for the development of their English language proficiency. Universities might consider how best to introduce international students to supportive and competent English language speakers at orientation, e.g. through 'buddy' or peer mentor schemes.

The ninth Good Practice Principle builds on the eighth Principle but focuses on the need for universities to develop effective strategies (not only 'opportunities') to ensure that international students have experience of a wide range of contexts where English is used and thus are able to extend the breadth and depth of their skills in using English appropriate to the sociocultural or academic circumstances. One element in these strategies is supporting international students to feel that they are able to enrich the experience and cultural knowledge of others. Certainly, universities can consider ways to demonstrate that they genuinely value multilateral exchanges of experience and ideas among people from differing language backgrounds. Although universities cannot 'ensure' that international students have effective social interaction that develops their English language proficiency off campus they can develop strategies to assist international students to have these experiences.

Examples of Good Practices

- The university provides discipline-specific academic and learning skills acculturation, which includes consideration of language proficiency and communication skills.
- The university has implemented plans to ensure academic and social inclusion for its international students from the commencement of their stay in Australia.
- The university demonstrates that it values the role played by international students in enhancing the learning experiences for all its students.
- The university ensures effective interaction of students from differing cultural backgrounds in regular academic activities.
- The university creates opportunities for students to form intercultural social networks in their learning settings and to engage in cross-cultural discussion in the discipline area.
- The university ensures international students in Australia are supported to have social interaction with a range of people in Australian communities, as well as opportunities for sharing their own culture.
- The university's community engagement strategies include intercultural experiences for international students.
- The university supports faculties or other groups (alumni) to provide intercultural interaction in a professional or disciplinary context.

Theme 5: Quality Assurance

Relevant Principles**Principle 10**

Universities use evidence from a variety of sources to monitor and improve their English language development activities.

Explanation

The tenth Good Practice Principle is derived from continuous quality improvement models, which entail the monitoring of outcomes and identification of ways to improve one or more elements of current practices. These elements include policies, procedures, projects and activities, curricula, resourcing and the ways in which 'results' are defined and assessed. Identification of improvements can occur through internal reflection, benchmarking and comparisons, research findings, or considering the views of students and other stakeholders.

Examples of Good Practices

- The university regularly compares its policies and practices for English language development against those of comparable institutions nationally and internationally and considers these in developing policies and practices that reflect the specific needs of its students and the requirements of specific discipline areas.
- Course reviews consider the extent to which development of English language proficiency and communication are taken into account in curriculum design and delivery.
- The university obtains regular information from students on the extent to which they consider their English language proficiency is improving.
- The university knows the extent to which its graduates are satisfied with the development of their English language proficiency through their time at university.
- The university knows the extent to which academics consider students' English language proficiency on entry is appropriate and is developed through their studies.
- The university knows the extent to which employers are satisfied with the English language proficiency and communication skills of its graduates.
- The university has ongoing dialogue with professional accreditation and registration bodies about their expectations regarding English language proficiency and the English language proficiency of the university's graduates.
- The university uses research findings, including its own, to inform its strategies for the development of students' English language proficiency.

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Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities

Review of Current Practices: December 2008

1. Introduction

This review has been prepared by AUQA and the project Steering Committee as part of the DEEWR-funded 2008 project to develop Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency for International Students in Australian Universities.

The background to the project is a heightened awareness of the role of English language ability in employment outcomes and a focus on international graduates to address skill shortages within the Australian workforce. This project is complemented by a project led by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education at the University of Melbourne to identify the impact of English language proficiency and workplace readiness on employment outcomes and performance of international students.

Under the terms of the grant provided for the project, AUQA is required to investigate and review current practices of Australian universities in respect of:

- entry standards and practices for international students of non-English speaking backgrounds entering Australian higher education institutions;
- practices to monitor English language proficiency and academic outcomes for such students over the course of their study, including processes for identifying 'at-risk' students;
- provision of general academic and/or specific English language support for such students throughout the duration of their course of study;
- embedding of support and ongoing assessment of English language proficiency into curriculum;
- arrangements to promote and measure the satisfaction of international students with their Australian experience while studying in Australia; and
- resource allocation for academic support services and monitoring student progress.

This review supports the development of Good Practice Principles by identifying existing good practices as well as current gaps in practice and in information.

In undertaking this review, AUQA and the project Steering Committee have drawn on previous research and documents, including the outcomes document and background papers provided for a National Symposium commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) that was held in August 2007. The outcomes from this Symposium and the evidence-based background papers that informed discussions at the Symposium are available from the Australian Education International (AEI) website at www.aei.gov.au.

To supplement information from the Symposium, the following activities were also undertaken:

- an analysis of findings and comments on English language proficiency for international students from AUQA's cycle 1 audit reports (2002–2007)
- an informal review of the issues raised in media coverage 2006–2008 and of information available from Australian university public websites
- general discussion of the main issues among the expert Steering Committee for the project
- an analysis of responses from universities and other stakeholders to a series of questions on the matters listed above.

As this review is of practices, the emphasis has been on identifying what is happening in Australian universities and the views of experts, rather than revisiting the available research evidence from the literature.

Some of the comments below are impressionistic and even speculative, as full information is not always available. Not all Australian universities responded to the request for information (24 replies were received) and of these not all addressed the questions, confining their responses to general comments and suggestions about good practice. In a number of instances, data to address the question simply are not available.

Moreover, the findings in AUQA audit reports date from 2002 to 2007 and many universities may have changed their practices since they were audited. (The four cycle 2 audit reports published at 10 November 2008 each contain substantial discussion of English language standards and support under the theme of 'internationalisation'.)

In addition to the review of AUQA audit reports, which is included as Appendix 1, this review has been significantly assisted by a submission from the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL Inc), included as Appendix 2.

This review is for use by the project Steering Committee and DEEWR's internal use. Subject to agreement by DEEWR, it may become available for wider dissemination.

2. Entry standards and practices for international students of non-English speaking backgrounds entering Australian higher education institutions

A key document is 'Discussion Paper 1 - Pathways, Preparation and Selection' prepared for the 2007 National Symposium. This paper summarises evidence available at the time and is the source for a number of the comments made below.

Entry pathways

The majority of international students entering Australian universities meet English language entry requirements not through taking a formal English language test but through a recognised entry pathway (Barthel, 2008), although this apparently is not widely known. Changes to Australian visa requirements may mean that an increasing number of students entering university directly from selected other countries will take an IELTS or other formal English language test but the substantial number of

international students entering university through pathways is expected to continue. Fiocco (2006) recognises 15 AQF categories that link school, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education, while a project underway by the Australian Technology Network (ATN) universities is examining the performance of students entering from 22 channels. Students admitted through these channels include those admitted with advanced standing into second or third year studies.

As none of these entry pathways guarantee that students will have attained a specified level of English language proficiency, a challenge for individual universities and for national policy-makers is to identify those pathways and pathway providers that prepare students well to tackle university studies and those that are less effective. In this regard, several universities expressed concern, based on their own studies, over the academic performance of some international students entering university immediately after completing Australian secondary schooling and/or vocational education and training courses.

The first step in such a study is of course the identification of students by pathway. University responses to a question on this point demonstrated the wide variety that characterises many practices in the sector: only about half the universities that responded were able to provide data on students by pathway and, of these, the data had in some cases been extracted specifically for the response and would not otherwise have been readily available.

Cycle 1 AUQA audit reports made recommendations for two universities about the need to monitor the progress of students entering from various pathways, as follows:

AUQA recommends that [X university] systematically collect and use statistics on retention and progress of students, reporting according to the categories of interest to the University.

AUQA recommends that [X university] ensure that the progress and relative grades of different cohorts of students, including offshore students and students entering through other pathways, are monitored at University, faculty and discipline level.

While it appears that a majority of universities are now aware of the issue and intend to take action if they have not already done so, some universities note their student administration systems do not record pathways information. That is, the ability of student administration systems to capture relevant admission information will dictate how readily the data can be extracted. And, as the response from Murdoch University notes, any data is likely to be based on 'route of entry rather than specifically on the methods of meeting English language competency'. Good practice would suggest the routine inclusion of this information and the production of reports by universities on the performance of student cohorts by route of entry or language pathway.

Most universities now monitor, or are beginning to monitor, the overall academic performance of international students (and of specific student cohorts) compared to the performance of domestic students. An increasing number have conducted ad hoc investigations into one or more aspects, e.g. cohorts by entry pathway or IELTS score, as discussed above, e.g. the Australian National University. To be meaningful, such monitoring would need to examine the extent to which the work of students whose

first language is not English is assessed in the same way as work by native speakers of English.

Some universities monitor the subsequent academic performance of students from specific direct entry, foundation or pathway programs (e.g. Deakin University), although they do not yet monitor academic performance for students entering through other pathways. Such monitoring is often a condition of the agreement between the parties. English Australia endorses the existence of a formal agreement and the monitoring as good practice for direct entry provision.

Many universities appear to monitor outcomes by pathway only through aggregated average progress data or average grade point averages. However, an average alone is unlikely to give a comprehensive picture of student academic performance by pathway. More detailed analyses of spreads and/or qualitative research may provide better information. It may be useful to develop guidance for the sector on the most appropriate ways to track student outcomes by entry pathway.

Entry standards: recognised formal English language test scores (IELTS, TOEFL and other)

Australian universities require an overall IELTS score of 6.5, or more commonly 6.0, or equivalent for general entry to undergraduate studies, although a number of disciplines have higher requirements (e.g. education, journalism, interpreting). Many universities require higher scores for postgraduate programs.

Australian universities specify the band scores required under each of the four IELTS bands. Some universities with an overall IELTS entry requirement of 6.5 for undergraduate entry require only a minimum of 6.0 in one or more bands, while a few universities with a minimum entry requirement of IELTS 6.0 accept a score of 5.5 in one or more bands. It is increasingly well-known that the developers of IELTS suggest an entry level of 7.0 for degree-level study.

In some institutions, there is a belief among academics, students and other stakeholders that increasing the required minimum formal English language test scores for entry will automatically reduce every student's academic language difficulties once at university. However, the evidence on the effects of different English language entry standards on subsequent academic performance is mixed. This is not unexpected as many factors affect students' academic performance. Certainly, the research suggests that IELTS entry scores 'can broadly predict students' language behaviour in an academic context' (Bayliss and Ingram 2006 p13). This research points to the importance of matching the language behaviour implied by the test scores with the language behaviour typically needed to cope linguistically with a specific course of study.

Entry standards: IELTS equivalences

Many, but possibly not all, Australian universities provide approved lists of ways in which English language entry requirements may be satisfied (most of these are publicly available). As noted in Discussion Paper 1 (p18):

There have been limited attempts within and beyond institutions to equate English language proficiency levels across the range of instruments and measures currently being used by Australian institutions (e.g. between IELTS and the wide variety of EAP, bridging and foundation programs). While many institutions publish 'equivalence tables' to describe their admission requirements to prospective international students, the basis for these 'equivalences' is difficult to justify.

The Discussion Paper identifies a fundamental incommensurability among the types of evidence as the main reason for difficulties with 'equivalences'.

'Broadly three types of evidence of English language proficiency are being equated by a great majority of education institutions:

- (1) Completion of a particular course of study - for example, senior secondary studies, Foundation studies, Certificate or Diploma studies, or completion of an EAP or other Direct Entry program of study that the receiving institution has previously agreed to in terms of content and length.*
- (2) The number of years spent studying previously in an English medium institution (duration of study).*
- (3) Standardised proficiency testing (IELTS, TOEFL, ISLPR) (results not based on any specific course of study are taken as the measure of proficiency).'* (p18)

Some universities comment that they have developed their own entry tests for specific situations, e.g. for assessing whether a student with non-standard entry qualifications should be admitted through an exemption to existing equivalence requirements. These range from quite informal interviews to more sophisticated tests, although the validity and reliability as well as the comparability of these tests to others may not have been demonstrated.

A number of recommendations in AUQA audit reports address the need for careful ongoing monitoring of English language entry standards, especially in regard to transnational education (TNE) as in the following examples:

AUQA recommends that [X university] reconsider the application of its English language entrance standards in light of the overall demands of the teaching, reading materials and assessment methods.

AUQA recommends that [X university] Academic Board review the University's entrance criteria, including English language requirements, in accordance with relevant national and international standards, and asserts control over these criteria through a robust monitoring system.

In affirming the review activity applied to the TNE operation, AUQA supports [X university] in its progress on and further intentions to implement the recommendations arising from the TNE reviews, but also encourages careful analysis of the advantages and risks of further growth in this sector, including maintaining appropriate entry and exit standards of English language proficiency.

There is clearly a significant issue with IELTS 'equivalences', which is compounded if institutions do not pay careful attention to the extent to which individual students are coping with the demands of their courses. Moreover, AUQA has found that the basis for granting exemptions from English language requirements or 'deemed equivalence' is not always transparent. AUQA audits indicate that not all universities keep central or even local precedent databases for exemptions and that decisions are sometimes made by one person with no other check or review. Good practice suggests that universities need very clear procedures for approving, reviewing and recording all equivalences including deemed equivalences.

Student expectations

The University of New South Wales drew attention to the 'mismatch on the part of students who believe that they have met the university's requirements [i.e. an IELTS score of 6.0 or 6.5] and will be able to cope without additional support', noting that 'the realisation that they should have sought assistance comes too late'.

A survey of university websites reveals a lack of specific statements concerning the expectations of international (and other students) regarding development of their English language proficiency during their course of study. It is likely that universities have previously not seen a need to articulate views on this matter. However, the growing scale of transition programs (see below) suggests a recognition by many universities of the need to introduce and socialise students to the expectations they will need to meet to succeed in their higher education studies. One example of a statement on mutual responsibility and what the university will provide is that given by the University of Queensland in its policy on English Language Proficiency Admission Requirements for University Programs.

The University of New South Wales gives as an example of good practice the UK Open University's open access self-assessment site and suggests a version of this site be developed for Australian universities:

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=3638&topic=all>).

3. Provision of general academic and/or specific English-language support for such students throughout the duration of their course of study

Academic language and learning support

A key document is 'Discussion Paper 2 – In-Course Language Development and Support' prepared for the 2007 National Symposium. This paper summarises evidence available at the time and is the source for a number of the comments made below and in section 4. A second key document is the AALL report at Appendix 2, which provides information on the nature and level of academic language and learning support in Australian universities together with some detailed examples.

Each of the 39 Australian universities has at least one academic language and learning unit or centre (Appendix 2, pp23-25) and some universities also have dedicated units within specific faculties. Although this support is not restricted to international students, Appendix 2 provides the best available data on the provision of language and learning support for students in Australian universities. International students are probably the major users of these services.

A few universities may provide language support for international students through positions attached to their office for international students. Where services are not provided solely through a central unit, coordination among all personnel involved becomes important, as otherwise resources are likely to be fragmented.

Nearly all the central units provide individual student consultations (face-to-face, phone, email), workshops of varying types and learning and teaching resources. The vast majority play an active role in subject/course integration, while many also provide extensive services for transition programs.

Services to students are provided free of charge, although some universities note that the availability of fee-paying generic English language services (external to the language and learning centre) gives students another option.

Some comments from experts suggest a distinction be made between 'developmental' language support, i.e. actions to further develop students' language proficiency, and 'remedial' language support, where students need to learn basic elements of grammar and syntax. At present, it is likely that academic language and learning services generally provides a mix of developmental and remedial support.

As reported in Appendix 2, the available information indicates that service levels, measured as the ratio of staff to students, vary widely (p4). The qualifications of staff working in academic language and learning support also vary, significant findings by AALL being that some staff have no relevant qualifications and that career paths are poorly defined.

Universities that responded to the Steering Committee's survey gave numerous examples of their support services and the work that staff of their academic language and learning support personnel provide to faculties and academic schools.

In general, AUQA audit panels have commended the provision of language and academic skills support, on the logic that such support assists in maintaining academic standards and the quality of education, and on the basis of very positive feedback and evaluations from students. These findings confirm the view of AALL and the authors of discussion paper 2 that one of the strengths of current practices is the high value placed by students on individual and group consultations and support, i.e. the work that academic language and learning staff undertake with students.

The following are examples of some commendations in cycle 1 audit reports:

AUQA commends the University of Canberra's Academic Skills Program, for the consistently high regard in which its services are held by students.

AUQA commends Flinders for its Student Learning Centre that makes a highly valued contribution to student academic support and is committed to continuous improvement of its services.

The lack of research findings on effectiveness and of comparative information on service levels (see section 6) has meant that AUQA audit panels are unlikely to identify areas of comparative shortfall or ineffective deployment at particular

institutions, although there is at least one recommendation for additional learning support in the cycle 1 audit reports.

Transition / orientation

Increased recognition of the need for better acculturation of first year students to the style and conventions of academic work and the academic environment has given greater prominence to the role of academic language and learning support within universities. As examples, at Murdoch University all new students are required to take a Foundation Unit to assist in the transition to academic study, while the University of Southern Queensland provides a free online Communication for Academic Purposes course written for international students and the University of Queensland provides a three-week Academic Communication Skills Program for students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

There are also English language bridging programs provided for a fee prior to entry to University, separate to the types of 'packaged' pathway arrangements for students who complete particular English language programs to be accepted into a university.

From a survey of websites and other information, a majority of Australian universities are giving considerable attention to activities to support students in their transition to university life and to ensure a good first year experience. The need for ongoing support after the first year has received less attention.

Although many transition and orientation activities may be directed in the first place to domestic students, they suggest that academic language and learning support is increasingly regarded as a mainstream activity. This in turn suggests an erosion of some aspects of the 'divide' between international and domestic students in respect of perceptions about the need for further development of English language proficiency.

Discrete credit-bearing courses

In their responses, several universities gave examples of specific credit-bearing units that are available to students to help them write effectively. Some of these units are generic, such as units in effective writing, but many others have been developed as discipline-specific units, e.g. engineering communication, and shade into the adjunct approaches mentioned in section 4 below. In some universities these discipline-specific units are compulsory for particular cohorts of students and include diagnostic assessment of English language skills (section 5).

4. Embedding of support and ongoing assessment of English language proficiency into curriculum

The AALL paper at Appendix 2 states that best practice in the field of academic language and learning 'has shifted from the provision of decontextualised tuition in generic study skills, such as academic reading and essay writing, to language and literacy development integrated into the curriculum of the mainstream subjects students are studying for their degrees...In an integrated approach, the literacy demands of the discipline become an explicit part of the subjects that students study' (p9).

AALL goes on to say that the 'key feature of this view is that the development of [academic language and learning] should be embedded in the mainstream curriculum of the subjects students study' (p9). While providing some examples of successful embedded approaches, the authors of Discussion Paper 2 point out that embedded approaches can be costly and complex to develop and may not be the best approach in all situations. Jones et al (2001) suggest that adjunct and integrated programs, involving for example, discrete units, may be as useful. The point is that both types of support serve valuable purposes and what is best for particular students in a particular institution will depend on the nature of the students' needs.

The overall consensus appears to be that good practice is exemplified by institution-wide policies on English language development, implemented through a variety of means that take account of the differing needs of different students and student cohorts, e.g. individual and groups support, adjunct and credit-bearing units within courses, together with embedding of language development into curricula. Examples of institutions that have adopted such integrated approaches include the University of Wollongong and the University of Technology, Sydney. (In this regard, it is worth noting that the University of Wollongong subject proposal form requires proponents to identify subjects that are expected to have a cohort of international or NESB students and to discuss the needs of these students with the Learning Development unit.)

Responses from universities showed there are many, many instances of embedded/adjunct language development within particular courses and units across a fairly wide range of discipline areas. As an example, Macquarie University reports that it has evaluated its Language for Professional Communication on Accounting project, which includes a range of activities within the Master of Accounting program, including workshops and support from the Centre for Macquarie English in providing feedback on students' assignments. A related project addresses intercultural learning in this degree program.

A noticeable feature of the responses is the 'spottiness' of embedded/adjunct language development within individual universities, e.g. the fact there may be one course but only one in each of several faculties. This is not necessarily a negative feature, as the language development approach may be targeted to areas where it is most likely to be beneficial and the available resources may not allow for more.

This feature does however prompt questions about the extent to which there is an overall philosophy and systematic plan for English language development endorsed by senior management in universities. It is likely to be beneficial for Australian universities to develop a policy statement of expectations regarding students' further development of their English language skills while at university and to map priority areas for attention.

5. Practices to monitor English-language proficiency and academic outcomes for such students over the course of their study, including processes for identifying 'at-risk' students

Early diagnosis

Under the *Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000*, Australian universities now are required to identify international students 'at risk' of not

succeeding in their studies. Some universities cited their ability to meet this requirement as an example of current good practice, without necessarily commenting on the extent to which such processes also address development of students' English language proficiency.

Discussion paper 2 identifies a range of practices in Australian universities for early diagnosis as well as for in-course language development, mentioning the DELA and PEDALA diagnostic assessment tools.

A number of Australian universities are now trialling or using diagnostic tests for early assessment in one or more discipline areas. AALL estimates the number as 18 and the interest in these tests was confirmed by responses from universities. The University of South Australia is trialling an assessment developed by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER), as part of a collaborative effort with Curtin University of Technology and RMIT University, which are piloting other early assessment tests. The Division of Student Life at Deakin University is currently assessing a range of diagnostic tools (see below).

The University of New South Wales requires early diagnostic academic literacy assessment and feedback for all students as part of its Enabling Skills approach, i.e. an early assessment task with subsequent feedback and action. Some other universities are adopting this model.

A range of discipline-specific examples is provided in Appendix 2 (see p10). Responses from universities provide some additional examples: Macquarie University conducts a language audit during student orientation in its Master of Accounting program; Southern Cross University notes that one of its licensed providers uses Eurocentres to provide a 'first day needs analysis' and then for ongoing support, monitoring and testing; and, offshore, [Monash University Malaysia] administers a language test for new students aimed at identifying which students would benefit from contacting the Language Learning Support Unit.

Ongoing monitoring of English language proficiency

Requirements under the ESOS Act 2000 to identify international students who are academically 'at risk' continues throughout a course of study. This requirement links back to universities' academic progression rules but there are signs that a number of universities have adopted a genuinely pro-active approach to monitoring for signs of academic under-performance. In its cycle 1 audits, AUQA commended Central Queensland University for 'attending to the academic progression of its students through the Student Journey project, which identifies and provides support across all campuses for students academically at risk'. The University of Southern Queensland has an online Academic Warning and Reflections Exercise to assist students to reflect on why they are not doing as well as they would like and develop an action plan.

There is growing (although still muted) interest in the ongoing use of diagnostic assessment of students' English language proficiency during their studies. In some faculties at the University of Technology, Sydney, students' academic language competence is monitored ongoingly within the structure of discipline-specific subjects. Deakin University has stated that it is seeking a diagnostic tool 'which tracks language development and focuses on professional language development from the mid point of a student's course, including an exit assessment (graduation)' but notes that available tools do not meet the University's requirements.

Murdoch University advises that it has commenced a project on language proficiency and overall unit performance, to determine whether 'those with language deficiencies are only just meeting the required standards in units as opposed to completing them easily'.

In general, however, there is not ongoing monitoring by universities of students' English language proficiency (and changes in proficiency over time) separate to regular processes of academic assessment. Given the indivisibility of language and academic performance, this is perhaps not surprising. However, it would be very helpful for the sector to have evidence of the extent to which particular interventions in academic language and learning support and embedded approaches make a difference to students' English language proficiency and to their academic performance. As there are wide differences in academic performance across any group of students, and a plethora of reasons for these differences, a substantial controlled experiment might be required for the latter (see also Discussion Paper 2, p28). Even then, it may prove impossible to control for all the variables that influence educational outcomes.

Prior to completion

Two examples of projects among Australian universities to monitor or assist students to monitor their own English language proficiency on completion are:

- The trial by Griffith University (with the support of IDP Education Pty Ltd, which owns IELTS Australia Pty Ltd) of a capstone English language proficiency test for graduating students, using IELTS
- A 2008 initiative by the University of Queensland to provide a funded IELTS test to graduating international students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

IDP also notes the Common English Proficiency Assessment System (CEPAS) used in Hong Kong, whereby graduates of public universities are offered reimbursement for the cost of a voluntary IELTS test taken at the end of their course.

Transition to work is an area being addressed by a number of universities, though generally not with a specific focus on the needs of international students. The University of Wollongong's career service, working with Wollongong College Australia, has developed a program called the Certificate in Global Workplace Practice, comprising four modules including one on workplace language. Murdoch University runs an elective unit 'From University to Workplace'.

6. Resource allocation for English language support and/or academic support services

Precise estimation of the total funding for academic language and learning support and for monitoring student progress is likely to be difficult. These services or portions of them are quite often provided through a range of organisational units. Academic staff time, for example in developing embedded approaches, is not readily costed into the total. Most universities that responded to a question on the allocation of resources replied that resourcing was determined on the basis of 'need' or a similar formulation, including historical levels of funding.

Some universities provided direct funding for their language and learning support unit but one or two advised that the information is not available centrally, as individual faculties are responsible for arranging their own provision of services.

In general, formula based funding is not used. At Southern Cross University, 'the basis of funding is a ratio of number of staff to expected [international] student demand'. As noted above, the ratio of staff to students appears to vary widely across the sector. One exception to this rule is La Trobe University, which advises that 0.17% of international student fees is set aside for language and academic skills support.

7. Arrangements to promote and measure the satisfaction of international students with their Australian experience while studying in Australia

Promoting international student satisfaction

Most universities that responded to the questions raised by the Steering Committee gave examples of current practices they use to promote the satisfaction of international students. Many of these examples are standard practice across Australian universities and/or requirements under the ESOS Act, e.g. a dedicated international office, orientation services). Some universities provide language and learning support or study skills advisors specifically for international students. Several examples were given of regular conversation groups for international students (e.g. Macquarie University; Australian National University; exploration by Edith Cowan University of a student-led conversation program based on a 'TAFE ReadWriteNow! Course').

Other examples given by universities include actions to increase understanding of diversity and cross-cultural teaching and awareness (e.g. La Trobe University's Cultural Diversity and Inclusivity Toolkit; Griffith University's Excellence in Cultural Experience Learning and Leadership program).

Peer mentoring and peer support through institutional, faculty or school/discipline-level programs are established features of student support (not only for international students) at a number of Australian universities.

Intercultural experiences, including making friends with students from other cultures and experiencing 'Australian' culture, are important for international student satisfaction, and also for developing English language proficiency. Many universities that responded mentioned clubs and activities for all students or specifically for international students, but very few talked of the extent to which such activities are known to provide genuine cultural 'exchange'. On acculturation and socialisation, the following examples of claimed good practices were provided by universities that responded to the question:

- The 'Aussie Family' program at the University of South Australia, which pairs commencing international students with Australian staff and students, combined with whole-of-city activities organised by the Town Hall or Education Adelaide
- Hosted groups at Deakin University designed to mix students (with senior international students as hosts)
- The Mates@UQ program of the University of Queensland.

AUQA audit reports have commented on some other initiatives: as an example, the 2006 AUQA audit report for the University of Technology, Sydney, noted that ‘a range of networks and activities are available to encourage international and local students to interact and to assist international students, such as the Tandem program run by Student Services’. As with many of the responses provided by universities, the success of these initiatives does not appear to have been evaluated in any formal sense.

Several universities have established working parties to address questions of ‘cultural acclimatisation’ or ‘mixing’, although it seems evident there is very much more that Australian universities could be doing in this regard. There would be merit in some evidence-based studies of programs that international (and local) students find particularly valuable.

Other universities have recognised the importance to international students of a safe and secure community environment. Victoria University has been working with the community liaison arm of the Victoria Police and other community groups to develop strategies to ensure international students do not become targets for crime, with a particular focus on public transport.

Griffith University notes perceptively that ‘more could be done to embed social activities into mainstream curriculum with cultural awareness and development of inter-cultural communication as outcomes’. As more universities address the internationalisation of curricula, there is an opportunity for initiatives along these lines.

Measuring international student satisfaction

Of those universities that responded to a question on this point, only a small number reported that they surveyed international student satisfaction during their studies.

Several universities referred to the national studies of graduates (GDS, CEQ, PREQ) and to their arrangements for seeking feedback from all students on the quality of courses and of teaching. James Cook University notes that it has recently agreed to participate in an ACER ‘Five Year Out’ survey and is participating in the ‘University and Beyond’ survey.

Southern Cross University conducts a departure/course completion survey for all international students and Murdoch University surveys all graduating international students. The University of Melbourne comments that a ‘survey of the international student experience has been conducted periodically’ and Victoria University states that ‘surveys of international student satisfaction after graduation are undertaken on a specialist basis’.

The University of Wollongong in 2008 piloted a student survey to review the satisfaction of international graduates who studied with its largest offshore provider, in addition to the CEQ.

One increasingly useful source of comparative information is the International Student Barometer™ run by *i-graduate* (www.i-graduate.org/). Around a quarter of Australian universities participate in this survey, which cover a very wide range of aspects of the international student experience and which provides detailed comparative reports.

8. Summary of gaps and implications for Good Practice Principles

In brief, this review finds that:

- Many people are not aware that the majority of international students satisfy English language entry requirements by means other than formal English language tests.
- An increasing number of universities are monitoring the academic performance of students by entry pathway.
- On development of English language proficiency, there is wide variability in the depth of understanding and the amount of action being taken among and within Australian universities.
- While all universities provide academic language and learning support, some universities are addressing the issues of English language development more systematically and a few have explicitly espoused an integrated institution-wide approach.
- There are many individual examples within Australian universities of embedded and adjunct language development programs including credit-bearing courses.
- Most Australian universities are paying considerable attention to students' transition to university, with a concomitant emphasis on ensuring students are better prepared for academic study.
- At least 18 universities have implemented or are examining early diagnostic assessment of students' English language development needs in one or more discipline areas.
- Resourcing of academic language and learning support is in general not tied to any specific proportion of international (or total) student fee revenue and the basis for determining 'need' is unclear. There is wide variability in the ratio of staff to students, although it needs to be recognised that universities will structure their language and learning support in different ways.
- Monitoring by universities (or self-monitoring) of students' English language proficiency on completion of their course is not common but is being trialled by at least two universities.
- The effectiveness of cultural integration activities within universities (and among universities and their wider communities) is not known and more directed strategies may be needed.

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10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency – Summary of Comments in AUQA's Cycle 1 Audit Reports

Appendix 2: Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency – Extract from submission from the Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL Inc.) July 2008

11. Glossary

AEI	Australian Education International
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AALL	Association of Academic Language and Learning
ATN	Australian Technology Network
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
CEPAS	Common English Proficiency Assessment Scheme
CEQ	Course Experience Questionnaire
DEEWR	Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DELA	Diagnostic English Language Assessment
DEST	Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (now DEEWR)
EAP	English for academic purposes
ESOS / ESOS Act	<i>Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cwlth)</i>
GDS	Graduate Destination Survey
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ISLPR	International Second Language Proficiency Ratings
PEDALA	Post-Enrolment Diagnostic Academic Language Assessment
PREQ	Postgraduate Research Experience Questionnaire
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TNE	transnational higher education
VET	vocational education and training

Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency

Summary of Comments in AUQA's Cycle 1 Audit Reports

1. Introduction

This paper summarises findings from the AUQA audit reports of 43 self-accrediting institutions (39 universities and four other institutions) that are relevant to a consideration of English language proficiency. It covers audit findings and comments directly about English language proficiency and language assistance where the comments include or relate to international students, especially in regard to onshore students. Some institutions, such as Charles Darwin University for example, had few international students at the time of the audit. While the audit reports for these institutions may comment on English language skills and support for other students, those comments have not been included in this paper.

Findings in respect of academic integrity are considered in this paper, as instances of plagiarism may be associated with a lack of proficiency in academic writing in English. Many reports from the later Cycle 1 audits discuss academic integrity, recognising that this is not an issue only for international students.

The Cycle 1 audits took place between 2002 and 2007, so the information in some reports may now be out of date. Appropriate caution should be taken in interpreting the comments below.

It should also be noted that AUQA's Cycle 1 audits were 'whole of institution' audits against the auditee's mission, covering all areas of operations but not to the same extent in each case. Audit reports address the most significant findings for a particular institution, so a lack of coverage of a topic such as English language proficiency does not imply the panel found the issue to be insignificant, merely that other matters were regarded as more significant.

This paper will provide input to the Current Practices Paper being prepared for the project to develop Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency in Australian universities.

2. Most Significant Audit Findings

About two-thirds of AUQA's cycle 1 audit reports mention English language proficiency or English language support. Many of these mentions however are brief and largely descriptive, indicating perhaps that measures of the effectiveness of entry criteria or the impact of language support are generally lacking. It is evident also that there is a dearth of comparative information on the adequacy of language and learning support: some earlier audit reports show that language and academic skills support functions were fairly new to the institution.

Other enabling academic skills, such as information literacy, are not included in this analysis, although a small number of commendations were given for projects to assist students with e-learning and information literacy. Comments in more recent audit

reports indicate that many universities have increased their focus on the transition to university, which may assist international as well as domestic students.

The most significant findings in audit reports take the form of commendations and recommendations or affirmation (an affirmation is an area for improvement that has already been identified by the institution and is being acted on). While any analysis of audit reports should consider all the audit findings, an understanding of the balance between commendations and recommendations across all institutions can provide an indication of those areas considered most important by audit panels.

In general, commendations have been given by AUQA for the provision of language and academic skills support, on the view that such support assist in maintaining academic standards and the quality of education. The following commendations were given:

AUQA commends the University of Canberra's Academic Skills Program, for the consistently high regard in which its services are held by students.

AUQA commends the highly-valued services provided to both students and staff by the Flexible Learning Centre (UniSA).

AUQA commends USQ for the Peer-Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) service, which is an example of innovative and good practice in supporting students with their academic endeavours.

AUQA commends Flinders for its Student Learning Centre that makes a highly valued contribution to student academic support and is committed to continuous improvement of its services.

AUQA commended Central Queensland University for *'attending to the academic progression of its students through the Student Journey project, which identifies and provides support across all campuses for students academically at risk'* (see below).

On language and learning support specifically for international students, AUQA commended Griffith University for *'its Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership (Excell) program'* (see below) and UniSA for *'the information and support services it provides to international students'*.

Regarding the careful consideration of entry standards, AUQA has commended the University of Melbourne for *'the formulation of a transparent set of student entry criteria and selection principles, and their consistent application by the Selection Procedures Committee'*.

AUQA has also commended the University of Wollongong for *'implementing an approach to plagiarism avoidance and referencing that encourages widespread awareness and understanding of the issues'*.

A number of recommendations in AUQA audit reports address the need for careful ongoing monitoring of English language standards, especially in regard to offshore programs as follows:

AUQA recommends that Bond University develop principles to guide the development, management and monitoring of transnational programs and partnerships, including probity and due diligence procedures and the maintenance of consistent and appropriate admission standards, including English competency.

AUQA recommends that La Trobe University reconsider the application of its English language entrance standards in light of the overall demands of the teaching, reading materials and assessment methods.

That the University of New England Academic Board review the University's entrance criteria, including English language requirements, in accordance with relevant national and international standards, and asserts control over these criteria through a robust monitoring system.

That SCU ensure sufficient level of English proficiency for the entry of NESB international students into all programs, but particularly those in China.

In affirming the review activity applied to the TNE operation, AUQA supports UTAS in its progress on and further intentions to implement the recommendations arising from the TNE reviews, but also encourages careful analysis of the advantages and risks of further growth in this sector, including maintaining appropriate entry and exit standards of English language proficiency.

On performance, AUQA makes recommendations for two universities about the need to monitor the progress of students entering from various pathways:

AUQA recommends that Bond University systematically collect and use statistics on retention and progress of students, reporting according to the categories of interest to the University.

AUQA recommends that UTS ensure that the progress and relative grades of different cohorts of students, including offshore students and students entering through other pathways, are monitored at University, faculty and discipline level.

There is one recommendation about the need for additional language and learning support:

That ways be developed at the University of Canberra to provide a level of service to meet both the needs of domestic students, and the expected increase in the number of International students at both the Bruce and UCBC campuses.

A small number of other audit report recommendations in respect of offshore operations also mention a lack of institutional attention to ensuring students meet English language proficiency requirements (e.g. a recommendation for Macquarie University in respect of the TMI partnership).

Several audit reports comment on cultural diversity training for staff, and one at least mentions the English language proficiency of staff, as in the following affirmation:

AUQA affirms Monash University's intention to ensure that the level of English language competency of some staff is improved and that support is offered to assist staff in improving their level of cultural awareness and their English language skills through initiatives such as the CLEAR program.

Risks to academic integrity, although often discussed in audit reports, are not commonly the subject of major findings. One exception reinforces an emphasis on an educative rather than punitive approach: *AUQA affirms Victoria University's revision of its policy on academic honesty and suggests the University include a statement on the educative use of plagiarism detection software and student access to such software.*

Taken overall, the balance of commendations and recommendations in AUQA audit reports demonstrate a tendency by audit panels to endorse language and academic literacy skills and to identify the need for additional monitoring of English language proficiency particularly in offshore partnership programs.

Some points of interest from the detailed Cycle 1 audit findings are provided below. Extended quotes are provided, as an indication of the ways in which audit panels have viewed the issues.

3. General Concerns over English Language Proficiency

A few Cycle 1 audit reports contain some general discussion of concerns over English language proficiency, as in the following examples:

Audit Panel members heard from employers that the standard of written and oral communication skills among graduates is an issue of concern. Although this issue is frequently raised in Australian and other higher education systems, the perception of stakeholders to whom the Panel spoke is that it is under-discussed or avoided by many institutions. The Audit Panel notes that UNSW has developed online programs, such as the Writing Workshop, to assist students to develop effective writing skills and that the Learning Centre provides writing assistance...In the view of the Panel, however, UNSW might consider additional means of addressing the issues, in the context of its aim of ensuring that its graduates have 'the skills of effective communication' and given the success of other enabling programs offered by the University.

In discussions with staff and students involved in SCU programs, delivered both on-shore and off-shore, the Audit Panel detected a common concern over the level of English language proficiency being accepted for entry into some programs and the University acknowledged this concern during the audit visit,

pointing to its moves to increase the period of English language training in pre-SCU enrolment studies.

[The University of Sydney] requires international students in bachelors degrees to have a minimum of IELTS 6.5 and, for some postgraduate courses, a minimum of 7.0 (and higher for some degrees)... Nonetheless, there is a view among some staff and Australian students that many international and permanent resident students are not conversing in English at an appropriate level, and that this is disadvantaging other students who may work with them in assessed team projects. This is a culturally complex issue, involving a blend of fact and perception, and the Audit Panel suggests that the University identify and consider strategies for addressing the cultural implications of a growing number of international and permanent resident students in the University's learning community.

The University [of Wollongong] has variable English language requirements depending on the precise provider (UOW, WUC and UOWD) and the level of course. Generally, it requires IELTS 6.0 or 6.5 for degree programs and 6.0, 6.5 or 7.0 for selected graduate programs. Until recently, individual course coordinators were able to waive English language requirements. This was creating difficulties for students who were unable to cope with the demands of academic work. The University reviewed this practice, and now any waivers of English language entrance standards require the approval of the PVC (Academic). It is too soon to determine whether this has fully resolved the issue, but it does indicate quality assurance in action...It is apparent that the level of English language competency remains a cause of tension among some staff and students. The University is seeking to respond to this by increasing its web-based support resources in this area.

4. English Language Entry Standards

English language proficiency requirements are mentioned in between a quarter and a third of Cycle 1 audit reports, including the examples given above. A further example is this extract from the audit of Flinders University:

In 2005, the University reviewed its English-language entrance requirements. Language proficiency of International English Language Testing System 6.0 for both undergraduate and postgraduate courses has remained, although a minimum level of 6.0 in writing and speaking has been introduced (previously there was no requirement for sub-band scores). The Audit Panel supports this change.

Several audit reports raise interesting examples of ways in which universities have addressed English language entry standards and requirements. Positive comments were made in respect of the Universities of Canberra and Melbourne, for different aspects of their processes, as follows:

[Canberra University, UC] acknowledged that it is currently in transition from 'an opportunistic phase' to a more 'strategic and planned' phase in the evolution of its International Education program. Even so, the Audit Panel felt

that there were areas where UC already held a competitive edge of which it could take further advantage. One such is leadership in the development of English language testing, where the University developed an English language entry test specifically for use in China, where IELTS is not readily available. The University is encouraged to explore the scope for this test's further development and application.

The [Selection Procedures Committee of the Academic Board at the University of Melbourne] is responsible for developing and overseeing policies governing the selection and admission of students into the University. The academic selection of undergraduate students is undertaken by faculty selection committees in accordance with the University's Principles of Selection... As part of its responsibility to monitor student performance, SPC compares the achievements of the various groups of students based on their entrance backgrounds.

More critically, there is an endorsement of the need for codification of English language proficiency requirements in the 2003 audit of the University of Queensland:

UQ is monitoring the situation in respect of competency in the English language in a number of ways. Recently the APPC set up a subcommittee to consider issues of admissions, and its brief has been broadened to include international admissions. There is some discussion of the extent to which checking is done centrally or in the faculties and schools. Whichever option is chosen, it is essential that those charged with applying policies have adequate training for the purpose. Also, UQ currently lacks a comprehensive policy on English language proficiency requirement, and the Audit Panel endorses UQ's current work on developing one.

Audit panels have found other more problematic examples of thinking around entry standards, especially in regard to transnational programs. For one program of Bond University:

Eight of the 20 units in the MBA are taught in Japanese and 12 in English... The Audit Panel formed the view that the program is coherent, despite the difficulties of bilingual presentations. The Panel was less confident about the admissions standards, especially the English competency of the students. Students are not required to achieve BU's standard 6.5 IELTS (or equivalent) on admission, but only by the time they first take one of the courses in English. There was conflicting advice on whether an early course includes English, and even if so, whether this is adequate. Bond seems to put itself in the position of either discontinuing a student who has inadequate English or overlooking it. This raises concerns about fairness to students and places pressure on standards. There appears to be no general BU policy on the handling of programs in Languages Other Than English....

Other examples of critical comments are in found in the audit reports for La Trobe University, the University of New England, and the University of Tasmania respectively.

[LTU] At one partnership in Vietnam, the English language entrance standard for enrolment in the Diploma of Business Administration had been lowered in order to maintain a viable number of student enrolments. Specifically, whereas IELTS 5.5 was previously required for entrance into the Diploma of Business Administration (which, in effect, constitutes the first third of the BBus), a student may now enter with 5.0. Students cannot complete the diploma without reaching 6.0, which is the entrance standard for the BBus. The partner assists the students with additional English language courses and, where necessary, provides additional Diploma of Business Administration tuition in Vietnamese... This raises the fundamental question of whether the English language competency is required foremost as essential for undertaking the Diploma of Business Administration learning process, or is required as a learning outcome of the Diploma of Business Administration. In order to know whether the method is educationally sound, it would be appropriate to compare the assessment results of students entering with different IELTS scores. The Audit Panel was advised that this comparison has not been conducted, and urges LTU to do so.

[UNE] The Audit Panel noted that the schedules of one Memorandum of Agreement pertaining to the offering of a masters program by distance education through a partner institution in Malaysia set out the English Language entry criteria. Three alternative English Language tests were stated as acceptable. Two were industry standards – IELTS and TOEFL. The third was a 250 word essay, which candidates are given 40 minutes to complete. This test was developed and is assessed by the University's English Language Training Centre. The University confirmed that this test was the initiative of the School responsible for the program, and had not been approved as an appropriate entrance standard by the Academic Board. The Audit Panel concluded that such a test falls outside the University's own entrance standards, and below international standards (IELTS and TOEFL), although it accepts the University's contention that this may be an isolated instance.

[UTas] However, a particular quality assurance issue that concerned the Audit Panel with respect to the programs being taught at the two Chinese universities were the differential entry levels of proficiency in English, which were less than that required for the programs with Indonesian and Malaysian partners (International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 5.5 in China, compared with IELTS 6.0). Panel members met with students and staff teaching in the IEN program at SFU and ZUT, and observed notably lower general levels of proficiency in English language. When this was raised with UTAS, the Audit Panel was advised that the IEN programs has a 400 hour English program in first year and an additional 120 hours during the remainder of the program...Though this goes some way towards providing assurance that proficiency in English is being addressed, the Audit Panel recommends that there be additional tuition accompanied by exercise of a stronger language proficiency testing regime, such as pre-and-post testing to

provide evidence that measurable improvement has been achieved by program's end.

5. Universities' associated providers

Several audit reports mention or discuss quality assurance arrangements in respect of universities' associated providers of ELICOS and other programs. Examples include ACUcom (the commercial arm of ACU's educational activity, which provides ELICOS and other non-award courses, including a large number of English language courses, principally for Japanese and Korean students).

There is more extended discussion of the quality assurance arrangements for associated providers, although few specific mentions of English language proficiency, in the audit reports for Monash University, the University of Notre Dame and Wollongong University, as set out below.

Melbourne Institute of Business and Technology is the University's principal institutional partner in the preparation of international students for university-level study. It is registered with the Victorian Department of Education and Training as a Registered Training Organisation and listed on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students. MIBT graduates are eligible to be considered for entry into the second year of the relevant Deakin undergraduate degree and to receive advanced standing. A number of quality assurance mechanisms are in place to cover this agreement, including Deakin approving all staff teaching in MIBT programs prior to appointment. Examination papers prepared by MIBT teaching staff are required to be approved by the Unit Chairs of the corresponding undergraduate units at Deakin, and examination scripts, once marked by MIBT teaching staff, are moderated by Deakin prior to the release of results. Moderation of assessment is the responsibility of the sponsoring faculty for each course. In accordance with the agreement between Deakin and MIBT, an Academic Advisory Committee was established in 2002 to oversee these arrangements. Examination of the minutes from this group suggest that it is a useful mechanism for discussing and progressing resolution of issues important to success of the venture such as improving the ease of transition of students from the Institute to the University.

Monash University has a number of subsidiaries. One of them is Monash College Group a wholly owned company of the University which is the result of a restructure of Monash International Pty Ltd in 2005. Monash College Group comprises five businesses including Monash College (MC), Monash University English Language Centre, Monash University Foundation Year, Monash Academy Study Groups (including Home Stay) and Monash Information Technology...

The establishment of Monash College Group has clarified and strengthened the relations between Monash College and Monash University, especially the interface between Monash College and the university faculties participating in MC activities. MC has a Board of Studies involving representatives from MC and University faculties which have an involvement with MC. The Board is the principal academic body of MC and responsible for the quality of MC programs. The Board has established the 'Boards of Examiners' to review and declare final assessments for all MC students. Membership of the Boards of Examiners includes examiners appointed from Monash academic staff

together with MC staff. MC teachers receive moderators' reports. Furthermore the links between MC and the faculties are maintained through area specific field of study managers...MC's quality system, which is documented in MC's Quality Management Manual, comprises regular internal reviews of standards and curricula and triennial visiting panel reviews which involve experts who are external to MC. The quality system is currently under review. MC builds on policies and procedures of Monash University where they seem appropriate and adapts these to the MC context. In addition to the internal quality assurance measures, MC is subject to five-yearly reaccreditation reviews by HERD and must report annually to the Victorian Minister of Education.

.....

Since January 2000, UNDA has maintained a contractual relationship with Phoenix English Language Academy, a privately-owned registered training organisation based in Fremantle that offers English language programs and an international consultancy and training service. The Academy is contracted by the University to carry out the following functions: marketing UNDA courses internationally; admitting international students according to UNDA guidelines; teaching English language programs to international students who have been offered enrolment at UNDA; and teaching the Foundation Program to international students who have been offered enrolment at UNDA. Under the terms of its contract with the University, Phoenix English Language Academy operates under the name of Notre Dame International (NDI).

UNDA's relationship with NDI has generally been an effective and positive one for the University. In some respects, NDI acts somewhat beyond the terms of the contract as a consultant to the University on such general matters as changes to legislative and reporting requirements with respect to international students...From a quality assurance perspective, the main committee of interest is the Academic Advisory Committee, which is charged "with overseeing, making recommendations and approving quality standards relating to academic matters under the responsibility of NDI". The Committee comprises two or more representatives each from the University and from NDI. Current membership is seven people. The Committee pays particular attention to monitoring the admission standards and tracking student performance. The University's Performance Portfolio suggested that the Committee has been less successful in monitoring the academic standards of the Foundation Program and the two Preliminary Programs and has identified this as an area for improvement.

.....

In 1996 the University [of Wollongong] decided to phase out its sub-degree programs. It established a new structure called the Wollongong University College (WUC) Network, within ITC, to offer these and other programs (most notably English language courses). The WUC Network comprises WUC Wollongong; WUC Sydney and Wollongong College Auckland (together with

courses in Dubai offered through UOWD). The rationale for the WUC Network is to diversify both student articulation pathways into the University and revenue streams. It seeks to do this through a limited liability organisational structure designed to maximise flexibility and protect the University from risks associated with these activities...

The WUC diploma programs target students who, according to the UOW CourseFinder, “did not meet the entry requirements for a Bachelor degree”. The University and WUC advised that most students at WUC fall below the usual entrance criteria for UOW (by up to about 10 University Admissions Index points). In terms of English language requirements, WUC accept students with IELTS 6.0 into the two-session diplomas or 5.5 (with a minimum of 5.0 in reading and writing) into the three-session diplomas (which include an English language component). This compares with 6.0 or 6.5 for the University’s degree courses.

In relation to assessing this goal, there is some moderation of exam scripts and papers (but not internal assessment) by the relevant University faculties. This moderation is after grades have been issued and so cannot affect student results. Examples were provided showing improvements that have been made to subjects. Although there are no directly equivalent diploma programs offered by the University itself with which to compare cohorts in terms of entrance standards, teaching performance and student learning outcomes, the first year of the corresponding degree programs may provide some opportunity for comparative analyses. Charts provided to the Audit Panel show the pass rates of WUC Wollongong diplomates during their first two years at UOW. This is a promising start to the collection of useful data, and the University is encouraged to further develop these to provide comparative analyses of year 2 performance between students progressing from WUC and students progressing from first year UOW.

6. Language and Learning Support

While in 2008 all Australian universities have a language and learning support unit, these units are a relatively recent development in some parts of the sector. For example at the time of the University of Ballarat audit in 2002, a Student Learning Support Officer had recently been appointed. On the other hand, some universities have offered language support over an extended period, as in this comment from the 2003 audit of the University of Canberra:

The Academic Skills Program (ASP) – originally set up to provide academic student support for NESB students, but evolved into a single learning resource for all students. In 1998 the ASP won the Australian Universities Award for Support of the Needs of international students.

The extracts below show the descriptive – and sometimes evaluative – treatment of the issues of language support and academic skills across a wide range of audits, including peer mentoring schemes (mentioned in other audits in regard to transition and first year experience).

[Bond University] The main problems expressed by foreign students are homesickness and English language. The BU English Language Institute (BUELI) offers a range of courses, and its flyer says that on arrival students “will be tested and placed in an appropriate class”. However, the courses are fee-paying, so this may involve extra cost for a student who might assume that because s/he had been admitted their language skills had been judged to be adequate for the course of study. Students are monitored and those that appear to be ‘at risk’ mid-semester are provided with assistance.

[Curtin University] The Learning Support Centre (LSC) was set up 18 months ago, to support international students only, principally with English language support. This, however, is a need for many students of non-English speaking backgrounds, and this year LSC was successful in obtaining an equity grant to expand its services to all students. Experience shows that this is likely to provide further benefits to the international students as they have greater contact with local students. Experience elsewhere indicates that such support can then usefully be further generalised to cover other study skills. Given Curtin’s expressed attention to generic attributes, it should consider supporting and developing LSC in this direction...As the LSC is so new, it is difficult for the panel to form a view on its effectiveness. It noted however that the approach being taken appears appropriate. LSC has an informative website, gives presentations on orientation day, and provides flyers in the international office. A brochure has been produced for staff members describing the LSC services and how students might use them...The aim is in fact to reduce the number of students who need the service, and to this end, they encourage staff to intervene when student problems are identified.

[Flinders University] English language support is provided through the Intensive English Language Institute, established by Flinders and the American Cultural Exchange in 1995... The Student Learning Centre, in conjunction with the ISSU, provides an Introductory Academic Program, which until recently was primarily directed to AusAID students. Modules are now more widely available to all international students...The Student Learning Centre supports identification of students at risk in their first year of study and provides academic, language and research skills support through one-to-one sessions (for writing and maths and/or numeracy support), workshops, and support materials...A review of the Student Learning Centre in 2005 has resulted in strategies to support broader outreach for the Centre, including self-help materials and improved communication strategies. According to a document outlining the Centre’s New Directions, the Centre’s model of engagement has been benchmarked against work of other similar student support centres at other universities.

[UNE] The University has developed a suite of resources, using print, CD ROM and audiotape media, designed to prepare students for studying at the University. Collectively called tUNEup, they address such issues as information literacy, numeracy, academic writing and study skills...However, there has been no analysis of whether tUNEup has fulfilled its objectives and, particularly, whether students who participate in tUNEup achieve, upon

graduation, learning outcomes equivalent to, or better than, those who did not participate in tUNEup. Such assessment would determine whether the impressively innovative method is actually resulting in improved student learning.

[UQ] In addition, all international students are entitled to concurrent English language support. The cost of this support, which may be accessed at any time during a students program, is met by UQ... International students receive support through the Student Support Services (SSS). They offer a range of services including the very popular Learning Assistance program. Residents, of course, do not come through the international sieve, but may still have problems with English, and are also directed to SSS. The Panel was informed that lecturers are generally aware of the possibility of such referral. UQ will need to monitor the load on the Learning Assistance program.

UniSA, with its emphasis on flexible learning, has a Flexible Learning Centre (FLC) analogous to the 'teaching and learning centre' in some other universities. This is the central provider of all academic support (other than Library services) for students and staff. The 'shop front' on each campus is called Learning Connection. Re-structuring student services into this form significantly reduces waiting times for service. Every enquirer is logged, and once or twice per semester schools are told the major reasons their students are coming to the learning or counselling area. The Panel saw some evidence of schools acting on this information. Student services and resources include orientation, language, counselling, on-line guides, support for international students, study skills, and careers advice. Services for staff cover curriculum design and a wide range of aspects of professional development... Firstconnection is an academic induction program for students that was successfully introduced in 2003 and has been revised for 2004. It addresses the different characteristics of school and university and helps students adjust to university life. International student support begins with the International Prospective Student Office at initial enquiry through to admission, and then Learning Connection provides the following support: pre-departure, on arrival, enrolment, orientation, on-line peer mentoring, during study, pre-return, and then a follow-up. Students interviewed by the Panel seem very satisfied with the support provided.

[USQ] These [services] are most formally provided through the Office of Preparatory and Academic Support (OPACS) and DEC, although the Audit Panel also found clear evidence of academic staff providing substantial academic support to their students outside of "regular" teaching times. Many initiatives are particularly noteworthy, such as the Peer-Assisted Learning Support program (PALS) in which some students who have completed a course with High Distinction provide assistance to students in that course's current cohort. PALS was developed as a result of benchmarking similar initiatives overseas and has proven successful in improving student pass rates. OPACS uses a range of mechanisms for assuring the quality of its activities, and those activities are achieving positive results for USQ students.

[UTS] The English Language Study Skills Assistance (ELSSA) Centre provides academic language and literacy support to students including English language and literacy teaching, academic development and intercultural education. For some programs, the Centre works with faculties to integrate academic literacy skills within specific subjects and degree programs. The Centre works with students from a wide range of backgrounds, as many students need some further preparation for academic activities, and staff may also be referred to ELSSA for language support and assistance.

[USC] The peer mentoring (advisers) program, in which successful later year students are paid to provide support in academic writing, learning and study skills to first year students is highly valued, including by those students at the Noosa Study Centre (section 2.7). This program is evaluated each semester, and outcomes for Semester 2, 2005 indicate a high level of satisfaction. A high number of student abroad students from non-English speaking backgrounds and return to study students use the program, which is funded by the Student Guild.

[Victoria University] Academic support for higher education students is available through the Student Learning Unit which runs both special workshops and weekly support sessions on various subjects in addition to providing discipline-specific online assistance and support. VU has a good record of success with AusAID scholarships for international students and an established early intervention strategy to ensure that 'at risk' students are identified and supported. One of the strategies in the Learning and Teaching Functional Plan is to develop an International Student Learning Support Plan. This is likely to be a useful initiative that should generate closer links between the delivery of services and the monitoring of international student outcomes....

Other examples from audit reports are the Integrated Bridging Program at the University of Adelaide, which is mentioned as an example of good practice for international higher degree research students and their supervisors.

7. Cultural Diversity and Integration

In addition to comments on language and learning support, a small number of audit reports contain an extended comment on issues of diversity and inclusivity, as in the following three examples.

[Griffith University] The Excellence in Cultural Experiential Learning and Leadership (Excell) is being used by a number of academic elements with significant international student numbers. The program was jointly developed by an international team, one member of which is a staff member of the University. The program is focused on enhancing international students' confidence and skills in academic, social and professional environments. Examples of topics covered include contributing in a team setting, initiating social contact, disputing cultural stereotypes and giving effective feedback. International students met by the Panel who had been involved in the Excell program found it to be highly valuable to them.

[UTS] The University has various policies and guidelines to encourage staff and students to embrace cultural diversity and inclusivity, such as its diversity guidelines for courses. A range of networks and activities are available to encourage international and local students to interact and to assist international students, such as the Tandem program run by Student Services. The University has identified enhancing such interaction as an area for improvement but should also consider ways in which interaction and cultural exchange may be fostered as a core aspect of learning and teaching, especially in large programs with significant numbers of international students. The Academic Board is initiating a project to consider ways of improving classroom practice and learning in an environment of considerable cultural diversity and AUQA endorses this approach.

[University of Sydney] Aligned with the issue of English language proficiency is that of cultural acclimatisation. The University has identified this as an ongoing challenge in An International University. Indeed, the University identifies cultural acclimatisation as a potential causal factor behind low progression rates of international students in some courses. While the report falls short of recommending such specific action as conducting an analysis of the causes and consequences of cultural acclimatisation problems, or establishing targeted programs for raising staff and student awareness of particular cultural issues, it does make a number of pertinent recommendations including paying ‘immediate attention’ to the experiences and educational outcomes of international students, operationalised as part of the Academic Board Reviews. The Audit Panel suggests that such recommendations, while accurately aligned to the identified issue, may require more specific ownership and focused strategies if it is to be effective in generating the desired changes.

8. Foundation Units

Another approach to learning support is found in the provision of foundation programs or units. Three examples from audit reports are as follows:

[Murdoch University] A distinctive feature of curriculum design at Murdoch is the educational role of the Foundation Units...The Audit Panel reviewed some of the Foundation Units (eg “Life & the Universe” and “Age of Information”) through the sample courses, and during the Audit Visit, in addition to interviewing some of the Foundation Unit Coordinators and teaching staff, the Panel looked at some additional Foundation Unit materials, including FDN106 “World Indigenous Knowledge”; and FDN150 “Reinventing Australia”. In addition, undergraduate and postgraduate students interviewed were asked to reflect their experience of taking Foundation Units...Through these checks the Panel was able to confirm the educational value of these units, especially through their adoption of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives, and inclusion of topics that enables Murdoch to address issues germane to

its ‘defining themes’ of Equity and Social Justice; Sustainability; Global Responsibility; and Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

[UWA] ...another valuable support service – the Transition Support Program (TSP). TSP is available for students who believe they require extra academic support prior to formal enrolment. The University recognises the potential threat to quality standards through expanding numbers of ESL and remote/rural students, and the TSP is a planned response. About 225 students per annum participate in TSP. Analysis of student performance indicates that TSP students achieve at a rate equivalent to other students, which suggests the TSP is successful.

[UWS] UWS offers several types of English language support for international students, depending on their enrolment and campus location. These include: provisional offers, which require them to study English for between 10 and 40 weeks before taking up their UWS program; electives such as ‘English for Academic Purposes’; and assistance through the Learning Skills Unit, which provides workshops and online resources to assist with academic writing.

9. Monitoring of Students’ Academic Performance and Identification of Needs

A significant number of audit reports comment on institutional arrangements for monitoring or reviewing academic performance and progress, often mentioning the need to track student progress by broad cohort, in accordance with national data requirements. The need for monitoring of progress by English language channel has not been discussed to any extent in Cycle 1 audits. Examples of the coverage in Cycle 1 audits are given below.

[Bond University] BU does not keep official retention statistics and information. This makes it difficult for the University to check whether it is applying the right admissions standards that match its curricula and assessment (see section 3.4). Also, it appears to the Audit Panel that BU is not systematically tracking the progress of foreign students within the University with respect to their IELTS scores on entry.

[CQU] CQU has a Monitoring Academic Progress Policy which arranges for the constant monitoring of and, where necessary, intervention in student academic progress. The policy is very effective, and is now an integral component of the Student Learning Journey. This includes monitoring student progress, interviewing students if they are failing to meet certain academic standards, and then designing tailored learning support programs to address identified needs. As a comprehensive system this is fairly new and not yet fully embedded. However, by the time of the audit there were over 600 interviews logged and some segments of the program were being implemented. Students continue to state “difficulty maintaining motivation” and “a lack of connection to the University” as the main reasons for failure to succeed. The monitoring system revealed a relatively high level of failure of courses by international students at the AICs, which CQU is encouraged to investigate and resolve...The Student Learning Journey is conducted at both CQU

regional campuses and C_MS campuses. The precise range of support services available differs, as do the student cohorts and their thematic issues, but the core concept is the same. At CQU, the Mathematics Learning Centre (MLC) and Communications Learning Centre (CLC) provide essential student learning support, whereas at the AICs this is provided by Learning Skills Units and the initial consultations conducted by client service officers....Other support that can be called upon includes personal interviews and life skills coaching (especially for international students) operated through friendly 'snack & learn' lunches...AUQA regards the Student Journey project and the guiding policy as exemplary of well planned and well integrated student learning support.

[Deakin University] A study of comparative academic performance of international and domestic undergraduate students undertaken by the University in 2001 showed that, from 1995 to 2000, the academic progression rates of international students surpassed domestic students at unit level. In 2000, retention rates of international students were found to be statistically significantly lower than those for domestic students for the first time since 1996. In response to this, the University made some improvements to the provision of student support services particularly at the Burwood campus. Deakin plans to repeat this research in 2005 and the Panel endorses this intention.

[Monash University Malaysia] MUM administers a language test for new students aimed at identifying which students would benefit from contacting the Language Learning Support Unit.

[University of Sydney] The University's data on student progress, provided in the Teaching Performance Report, shows that international students at Sydney in CHASS and CST have lower progression rates than domestic students and international students in the Go8. This issue was also commented on in An International University. However, it is not clear how it is being systematically taken up in the University. The Phase Two report on CHASS makes no mention in the section on Internationalisation, whereas it is dealt with in the report on CST. The University would benefit from a formal process of follow-up for issues raised by the student data and review reports (see also section

[UTS] While monitoring of progress and attrition for various student cohorts is undertaken by the University as part of reporting requirements for DEST (eg international fee-paying students), the Audit Panel found it difficult to obtain University-wide data on progress, attrition and grade point averages for the three cohorts of domestic, onshore international and offshore students. Some, but not all, faculties with offshore programs are able to provide comparative analyses of the performance of offshore and onshore cohorts. The University must improve its ability to compare the performance of different cohorts. It is noted that the University has identified as an area for improvement changes to CASS to record IELTS scores at commencement.

[University of Wollongong] During a demonstration of the data reporting capabilities of COGNOS, the Audit Panel sought, at random, a comparative analysis of the results of certain student cohorts. Specifically, it asked for a comparison of full-fee paying students (almost entirely international students) with HECS-liable students in the Faculty of Commerce. The report showed that the full-fee students' failure rate is significantly above HECS students. The Audit Panel did not conduct an exhaustive analysis of this phenomenon across all faculties or fields of study. However, as the Faculty of Commerce has the largest number of international students, it would appear that there is an issue there for the University to pursue.

10. Academic Integrity

Many audit reports, especially those from 2004 onwards, discuss academic integrity and/or plagiarism in the context of maintaining academic standards and the effectiveness of policy implementation. A few of these reports draw a link between language and literacy support and academic integrity or place particular emphasis on the educative uses of plagiarism detection software, as in the extracts below.

[ECU] The Audit Panel was advised by ECU partners that the concept of plagiarism does not transfer easily across cultures, and that an increase in the use of problem-based assessment (as opposed to, for example, reviews of extant theories) would help to ensure that plagiarism rules were not inadvertently broken. The Audit Panel makes no judgment about this idea per se, except to note that the depth of discussion manifest in some of the relationships between partners and the University shows an appropriate focus on student learning.

[UNSW] In March 2005, Academic Board endorsed a six-month University-wide trial of a new framework for dealing with student plagiarism from Session 2, 2005. Consistent with an educative rather than a punitive approach to issues of plagiarism, the University has chosen the Learning Centre to host its [Plagiarism and Academic Integrity](#) web site as a central resource for staff and students. Other elements of the framework include: the appointment of student ethics coordinators; creation of a central plagiarism register; and a six-month pilot study of an electronic similarity detection tool (Turnitin™) in selected faculties and schools. The Audit Panel notes that individual faculties have also developed specific statements on plagiarism and guides for staff and students.

[UTS] AUQA supports the need for the University to issue clear guidelines on the use of Turnitin™, explaining how plagiarism detection software will be used to assist students improve their academic practice, how it will be used in assessment, and how it will be used in examining allegations of plagiarism.

[Victoria University] Students in both onshore and offshore programs are well-aware that VU states that it regards plagiarism as unacceptable but some students feel they have heard this message so many times that it has lost meaning. Despite the University's intention of taking an educative rather than a punitive approach, the Audit Panel is not convinced that the University has



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Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency

submission from the

Association for Academic Language and Learning (AALL Inc.)

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the steering committee of the *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency* project.

This submission, prepared on behalf of the *Association for Academic Language & Learning* (AALL) is the result of a consultative process of *Academic Language and Learning* (ALL) staff across Australia. AALL representatives organised and/or participated in regional and state meetings between April and June 2008. Responses were received from every state and territory AALL representative as well as from several individual ALL centres/groups.

As many ALL staff contributed towards their institution's response to the project as well as to this submission, several points, issues and recommendations of this submission are likely to overlap with (but hopefully not contradict) those submitted by individual universities.

ALL staff who contributed to this submission are aware that the terms of reference of the **Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency** steering group mainly focus on international students. As most of the language proficiency issues concerning international students, as well as strategies to address them, also apply to other students, it was appropriate to prepare this submission with all university students in mind.

This submission first provides some **background** information about ALL professionals and how they work. It then presents the **educational contexts** within which ALL professionals work. The third section is the **summary of responses** from ALL centres/groups across Australian universities. The submission concludes with **recommendations** for the steering committee's consideration.

submitted on behalf of AALL
 Alex Barthel, President
 July 2008

- Appendix a: Academic Language & Learning (ALL) centres/units – Australian universities (November 2008)
- Appendix b: Academic Language and Learning activities (July 2008)
- Appendix c: The UTS ELSSA Centre integrated and collaborative approach in the provision of teaching and learning support at UTS (August 2005)
- Appendix d: Good practice in ensuring and supporting English language proficiency at the University of Wollongong (UoW)

1. Background

The *Association for Academic Language & Learning* (AALL) is the professional organisation which represents ALL professionals working across Australian universities to provide a wide range of educational programs and services to students and university staff.

ALL professionals play a valuable role in their universities by providing teaching both inside and outside curricula to assist students in developing appropriate academic language and learning skills; by collaborating with other academic staff in the development of curricula so that they provide better learning opportunities for students' development of academic skills, and by contributing to the development of policy in relation to academic language and learning. This role is an important one in today's universities, given the increasing pressures to maintain excellence in teaching and learning with diminishing resources and given that there is good evidence that ALL professionals are indeed able to impact on students' development of skills, overall success and retention.

An estimated 450 (full-time and full-time equivalent) ALL staff are employed across the 38 Australian universities to service over one million students, of which more than 26% are international students. The ALL centres/units, their location, approximate staff numbers and ALL staff to student ratios are summarised in table 1 (**appendix a**).

2. Educational contexts

2.1 The issues

It is widely acknowledged across the Australian tertiary education sector that many students are to a large extent unprepared for University study. This is largely evidenced by:

- students' difficulties in grasping the specific purpose and requirements of certain types of academic assessment tasks, such as critical analysis and essay writing;
- students' written texts that lack a coherent argument and are descriptive rather than analytical;
- written texts that fail to analyse and synthesise the literature effectively and are incorrectly or inadequately referenced (e.g., plagiarised);
- written texts with such levels of grammatical inaccuracy that they are incomprehensible; and
- oral communication difficulties caused by limited spoken competence and/or pronunciation problems.

In addition, specific groups of students need developmental assistance in areas related to their background, for example:

- local non-English speaking background (NESB) students often come from disadvantaged educational and/or socio-economic backgrounds and require developmental as well as remedial assistance;
- local English speaking background (ESB) students are assumed to have reached English language levels enabling them to complete tertiary studies with little or no assistance, even though increasingly large numbers have language problems similar to those of local NESB students;
- mature age students frequently lack the confidence to write academically as a result of inexperience in academic literacy and also the contrast between their work competencies and the demands of the faculty;

- international students who, even though they meet English language entry requirements, need considerable language and cultural adjustments; and
- postgraduate students who are assumed to be competent in English and to have acquired, through undergraduate studies, the academic language and learning skills necessary to succeed in their studies, frequently have considerable academic language and learning difficulties.

Communication-related issues are manifested in higher education institutions in various ways:

- inadequate and inconsistent resourcing of ALL services and related educational strategies;
- academic staff frustration about students' lack of preparedness and academic language;
- staff perceptions that teaching written and spoken communication is not their responsibility;
- conflicts between maintaining assessment standards and fostering equity;
- concerns about the appropriateness of the minimum English language requirements for admission to university; and
- inconsistencies of university policies and rules regarding academic language and learning matters.

2.2 Service provision

ALL staff service their institutions and assist students and staff in a variety of ways. In 2007, the AALL funded a project to complete a preliminary benchmarking of ALL professional practices by surveying ALL centres/groups as to the practices in which they engage. Responses were received from 44 (59%) of the 75 ALL units/centres, representing 33 (85%) of the 39 universities.

The 2007 ALL benchmarking project members coded each practice and produced a detailed relational database from which ALL units can generate reports and from which users can obtain information for their own research. The ALL activities most commonly reported were:

- 95% **Student consultations** (face-to-face, on-line, drop-in, phone)
- 95% **Learning & teaching resources, non-integrated with subject** (on-line, print, audio-visual)
- 93% **Workshops** (discipline specific, generic)
- 86% **Subject/course integration** (curriculum development, learning resources, guest lectures, co-teaching)
- 84% **Research/scholarly activities related to ALL practice** (learning issues, grants/awards, teaching evaluations, publications, learning needs analysis)
- 80% **Transition** (academic preparation, orientations, alternative entry)
- 64% **Committee representation and policy development** (at both university and faculty level)
- 59% **Staff development and support** (consultations, workshops, tutor training)
- 57% **Research student support** (general and discipline specific)
- 52% **Courses** (credit and non-credit)
- 43% **non-ALL focus** (maths, science, computing)
- <33% **Peer mentoring, peer tutoring**

These activities are consistent with findings of other benchmarking reports (Ransom and Greig, 2007) and one of the discussion papers (Arkoudis and Starfield, 2007) commissioned by *Australian Education International* (AEI) for the 2007 'National symposium: English language competence of international students'. An update (July 2008) of the above benchmarking information is provided in *Academic Language and Learning activities - July 2008* (**appendix b**).

It should be noted that there are considerable inter- and intra- institutional differences in the provision of ALL services. The table of ALL centres/units (**appendix a**) shows that the ALL staff to student ratio vary enormously across the sector, ranging from 1 to 900, to, 1 to 7,500 (average, 1 to 2,900). The way students are assisted also varies. For example, at university 'A', one or more faculties may have initiated and implemented comprehensive strategies to integrate discipline-specific ALL strategies across the curriculum, supported by sustainable staff development programs, while other faculties at the same institution may not. At university 'B', in the absence of university-wide policies/procedures, all faculties may refer students in need of ALL assistance to generic workshops or to a drop-in centre where they expect academic language problems to be 'fixed'.

Overall, however, at many universities, ALL provision is moving towards a model of support of academic literacies being embedded into the curriculum. The process to move from an 'ad-hoc' and more generic type of ALL service to a more contextualised and integrated ALL provision is slow and this is frequently the result of inadequate funding.

3. Responses to the *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency* project

The responses below are from one or several universities and are presented here, in order of frequency.

3.1. Strengths and weaknesses of the current practices of universities and other higher education providers in ensuring and supporting students' English language proficiency, particularly that of international students

3.1.1 Strengths

The most frequently mentioned strength of current practices highlighted the value of discipline-specific academic English language/communication development, integral to and embedded throughout degree programs. Other strengths included:

- Provision of ALL support through a central ALL unit or centre, available to all students and supplemented by faculty support strategies, making use of the existing infrastructure, services, early intervention strategies and resources.
- Promotion of services to students at orientation and through informal networks, as well as staff awareness. Orientation workshops provide a sense of community and encourage in new students a sense of confidence in their ability to cope with the new culture that is university.
- The value that students place on ALL services, reinforced by the provision of one-to-one consultations which help all students develop their ALL and increase their self-confidence and self-efficacy. Generic workshops are also an important and useful strategy for developing academic skills and competence. For example, one university runs a once-weekly Learning Skills workshop for seven weeks on campus which focuses on ALL. These workshops are also offered off-campus for distance students.
- Initiatives exploring the potential for ALL Centres to become a Virtual Learning Centres, at universities where distance students comprise the bulk of enrolments.
- The provision of a combination of complementary discipline-specific and generic workshops for international students.
- Preparatory programs (many pre-sessional) are highly valued as they provide a vital bridge for students. Some are provided by universities, many by other providers (such as ELICOS), and many of these programs combine English language proficiency with academic preparation. Examples frequently mention Introductory Academic Programs (IAP) for AusAID students as good models.

- Co-operative transition programs between ELICOS and ALL staff for EAP students. However, some universities with ALL services designated for international students see this as a strength, whereas others would prefer to have ALL services integrated and available to all students.
- Increasing commitment within units, schools and faculties to address the issue of English language proficiency, along with some very talented and experienced academic and professional staff who are committed to addressing problems in a meaningful way.
- Identified and tailored services for the lifespan (throughout their degree) of all students' experiences in Higher Education in Australia.

3.1.2 Weaknesses

The most common weakness highlighted in the responses related to under-resourcing of ALL services, with comments such as 'erosion of services'; 'funding levels are indirectly proportional to the growth in student numbers'; '[ALL] staff numbers are the same as six years ago while the number of international students has doubled'; 'I work across six campuses, but there are only 5 days in a week'. The gradual 'downgrading' of ALL services was mentioned in a number of responses and included the moving of ALL services to the Library, and re-classifying ALL staff position from an academic to general status, as well as excluding ALL staff (including managers and directors) from decision-making processes (senior committees).

Other weaknesses included:

- The very limited academic literacy skills of pathway students articulating from TAFE, High Schools and many private providers. Many ALL staff commented on the fact that, as pathway students often do not need a university entry IELTS, their language problems often remain undetected, particularly when they articulate on the basis of recognition of prior learning into the second year of a degree.
- The difficulty of identifying students who most need assistance, which could be the result of several factors, including frequent late timing of first assessments, often caused by sessional staff with high workloads. Also, at many universities, there is still considerable resistance from some staff who may have a 'sink or swim' attitude towards students with academic language problems.
- At some institutions there is a culture among students of being reluctant to admit problems or difficulties and to access help. There is a remedial connotation to support for the needs of international students; however, while English proficiency is a necessary condition for good scholarly writing, it is not the only condition for scholarly success. It should not therefore be assumed that English Language proficiency is always the essential problem if students are found to be at academic risk.
- Academic English language competence is still too frequently perceived by universities and/or faculties as something peripheral or remedial which can be addressed outside faculty, rather than by taking on the idea of embedding academic English language and communications in course or program content. There is an unwillingness to see English language development as anything other than a service outside mainstream course structure.
- The focus of ALL support is generally on campus students, and more attention needs to be given to off campus and off-shore students. Additionally, greater focus is generally given to international students, and migrant students are either overlooked or perceived by lecturers to come under the banner of 'international'. However, these students often have significantly different language and learning needs depending on their entry point to the institution and their prior learning experiences.
- Support for English language proficiency is inconsistent across faculties, campuses and universities, and it is not always clear what support is available, who is eligible and if/where support can be

obtained. The university's response to the problems of academic language competence is frequently not clearly articulated; it remains reactive rather than proactive, bottom up rather than top down, ad hoc and isolated within units rather than planned and coordinated at school, faculty and institutional levels.

- There are recurring concerns regarding the lack of training and professional development for academic staff in how to support and teach international students whose first language is not English, and in inconsistent assessment practices. Poor teaching and assessment practices only confuse students, encourage plagiarism and the production of writing of low academic quality. In addition, perceptions of levels of language competence in written English can affect grades, which is confusing for students who may find that they receive a distinction for one subject but be asked to resubmit because of language proficiency problems in another subject.
- While the seriousness of the issue is often a point of debate and frustration within academic circles, the response is rarely funded properly and experienced practitioners (e.g., trained and experienced ALL staff) are often marginalised, undervalued, underpaid, and/or ignored.
- There is too much focus on failed models (such as generic skills workshops, adjunct classes or meaningless diagnostic tests) rather than on embedding the necessary skills within core units.
- Several ALL staff commented that entry-level English proficiency at their university is too low. There is much debate about the reality of proficiency and what can and should be reasonably demanded of students once they have been accepted at a certain level, e.g., an IELTS of 6.5. There appears to be an assumption that students' language proficiency will or should improve during the course of study, but there is little support in the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) literature for such a notion. Non-language experts have very little understanding of language issues, particularly IELTS test results, and need ongoing education about the meaning of various scores.
- There is limited research on how students should best be supported in developing language competency in the context of the enrolled student, which contributes to inadequate services for English language development as concurrent learning.
- Postgraduate students with ALL needs are often neglected, as it is wrongly assumed that they have no language problems.
- Beyond strict language problems, many students have little or no background knowledge in their discipline, which means they lack the cultural background and related academic discourses of their discipline.
- There is a failure among agents selling the university product to do so responsibly.

3.2. Improvements to pathways into university study that would help maintain or improve English language proficiency among international students

Unmasking a tertiary student's academic practice does not simply involve 'fixing the English'; 'fixing' does not imply learning, and greater English language proficiency is not necessarily going to solve academic proficiency and progress issues; students need to be educated about and inducted into the process of research and writing at the tertiary level. However, what students *actually* need in this respect is not necessarily what they *believe* they need or want. Thus, caution is needed about 'improving English language proficiency' pre-entry: the students' needs are far more complex, and pathways need to systematically prepare students linguistically and academically and culturally in an evidence-based way.

3.2.1 ESL/tertiary preparation pathways – preparation and selection

One of the major assumptions on which tertiary institutions operate for on-shore international students who are not native speakers of English is that their preparation pathway – Foundation/ACCESS/ESL/HSC-equivalent – has provided them with appropriate tertiary-ready language and academic skills and strategies. Foundation/ACCESS programs, often badged with the tertiary institution's logo or name (e.g., 'UQ Foundation', 'UNSW Foundation', 'ANU College', 'Curtin Direct English Entry Program') give the impression that the pathways are pedagogically sound and evidence-based, and are thus credible preparation pathways for students seeking tertiary admission. Nonetheless, there are no clear or consistent quality assurance mechanisms that effectively guarantee that students are systematically and adequately prepared for tertiary admission.

Clear indications are emerging that international students 'at risk' academically are more likely to have accessed tertiary study via Foundation/Access, or have gained entry through HSC-equivalent pathways comprising Physics/Chemistry/Maths/native language studies and 'satisfactory' ESL. Such studies – nascent as they are – are not welcomed by tertiary institutions wherein admission numbers or institutional badging associations may be compromised.

Foundation/access pathway difficulties can be associated with:

- Inexperienced, casualised staff who have little time/desire/ability/capability of researching, learning, and communicating the variety of ways in which students need to learn - and communicate that learning - at tertiary level.
- Senior staff, e.g., such as Directors of Studies, who have little knowledge of the kinds of difficulties students are encountering post-transition, and therefore fail to build better practice into the curriculum. (One curriculum document mentioned by an ALL contributor designated four hours of 'listening', was six years old, and had no in-built pedagogy.)
- Dubious and/or uncertain links between the pathway institution and receiving institution, particularly where there are proximal locations. More focus would appear to be spent on frontloading (e.g., marketing and recruitment) than on the onward pathway, yet there is a strong co-vested interest between the sending and receiving institutions, and a duty of care to students who assume because of proximal location or badging that the pathway is systematic and rigorous.
- TAFE articulation to Higher Education with students gaining credit for the first year is a significant issue. It is recommended that the two sectors work together to overcome the problems students face in this articulation. HSC equivalent pathways can also be problematic from a post-transition point of view, as ESL is deemed 'satisfactory' for those students to whom it applies, yet no moderation exists. Given the lack of quality assurance vis à vis the English language demands on students entering tertiary institutions, such students enter with pre-admission confidence that their English language proficiency is adequate, only to become very disoriented post-entry.

There was general support from ALL centres/groups for a proposal to have standardised outcomes measures for ELICOS EAP courses which lead to entry to higher education institutions.

3.2.2. On arrival from ESL/tertiary preparation pathway

A credible tertiary entrance pathway, including ESL pathways, would result in fewer calls for diagnostic testing (DT) post-entry, which is very time and resource intensive. The issues with DT include:

- Who undertakes the DT- all students, or only international ESL students?
- What happens after the student has been identified? To what extent can receiving courses or programs *mandate* that students performing below par after DT take extra courses – often at a cost to the student?

- If the student is in a profession-based course, such as Accounting, Law or Nursing, where taking an additional course in English/academic preparation is an add-on, non-credit bearing course, to what extent are students being doubly penalised? Having already poor academic and English literacy skills, they now have to struggle with an extra demand on top of the issues with which they are struggling.
- If one talks of diagnostic ‘assessment’ (vs. ‘testing’), then students are less likely to be frustrated by the fact that they have to undertake an additional post-entry test. An academic assessment is more likely to reflect the student’s academic and language literacy. Examples of such are already in practice where courses require students to undertake a small assessment within the first 2 weeks of the semester. This makes good pedagogical sense and is less confronting, having the added incentive of contributing – albeit in a small way – to the student’s overall assessment in that course.
- Diagnostic assessment does not single out international ESL students from domestic students – all students do it, and students at risk are identified across both cohorts.
- Diagnostic assessment in the context of the curriculum has the potential to identify all students with academic and language issues, both across all cohorts, and specific to the program or discipline, which is much more relevant, appealing and manageable within the College or Faculty. The ultimate aim is to identify all students at risk – not just linguistically.

3.2.3 Orientation programs for international students

Most universities that responded offer orientation programs for international students, varying in length from one to five days. Students are provided with a comprehensive range of information about their host university, government policies, health cover, support services and so on. Many universities, particularly those providing shorter orientations, commented that international students would benefit from a longer orientation program that would take into account issues related to acculturation, Australian language, academic English skills, and teaching and learning principles in Australian universities.

As the orientation process may not be the same for all international students it is recommended that the process be standardised and made more systematic. It would be beneficial to streamline the orientation process for all international students to ensure that whatever pathway they enter, they all go through the same on-arrival orientation experience at their Australian university. One suggestion is to create a standardised international cultural and academic bridging program over a period of 1-2 weeks (similar to the current IAP program for AusAID students). It would be highly facilitative if this program were to be compulsory for all international students. Delivering a staged acculturation and academic skills orientation program over a series of three steps, pre-departure, upon arrival, and 4-6 weeks into the first semester, is also seen as beneficial.

In order to improve the language proficiency of international pathway students, several responses suggest:

- conducting ongoing research into pathways as indicators of success and appropriate levels for university entry;
- implementing measures to ensure comparability between the different entry pathways;
- implementing national standards for different pathways and commitment by universities to upholding English language entry standards, listening to informed advice and resisting pressures to reduce entry requirements due to market competition;
- including representations from professional bodies; and
- making the use of the *English Australia* document *Best Practice in English Language Programs* mandatory.

3.3. Examples of current good practices to ensure and support higher education students' English language proficiency, in particular that of international students

3.3.1 Integrated ALL provision

For the success and the retention of university students, a range of skills and strategies- written and oral communication in particular - need to be made visible, explicit, and accessible and, importantly, need to be embedded in core subjects. The development of these academic literacy skills is today widely recognised to be most effective when they are contextualised within disciplines and integrated across the curriculum.

ALL professionals draw on a number of theoretical perspectives, including systemic functional grammar, genre theory and critical discourse analysis to inform their practice. Systemic functional grammar and genre theory provide a means of analysing student texts to clarify discipline-specific requirements. Critical discourse analysis helps lecturers understand the relative value of various knowledges within specific disciplines and to locate these within broader academic, professional and social contexts. Such theoretical knowledge enables ALL staff to design subjects and tasks to help students understand and fulfil (as well as critique) the requirements of their discipline.

One view of ALL is that students' entry level skills should be adequate to enable them to learn successfully. This view is based on the idea that academic literacy is a generic set of skills that students already have and can apply to new situations. Students whose reading and writing practices do not conform to academics' expectations are deemed to have a 'problem' that needs to be 'fixed' by someone outside the faculty, such as the ALL centres or units. Individual students, often those from educationally disadvantaged groups, are perceived as having deficits that require remediation.

This approach is in direct conflict with research in the field of ALL. Best practice in this field has shifted from the provision of decontextualised tuition in generic study skills, such as academic reading and essay writing, to language and literacy development integrated into the curriculum of the mainstream subjects students are studying for their degrees. As the reading and writing practices that students need to learn are specific to their discipline, these discipline-specific literacies are most effectively learned in conjunction with course content. In fact, the task of learning course content can be restated as becoming literate in the different and specific ways of particular fields of knowledge. In an integrated approach, the literacy demands of the discipline become an explicit part of the subjects that students study.

The key feature of this view is that the development of ALL should be embedded in the mainstream curriculum of the subjects students study. This kind of teaching leads to high quality learning for students and a high degree of equity. If, on the other hand, ALL is assumed rather than explicitly taught, many students, particularly those from marginalised groups, will be disadvantaged.

Some students require more assistance than such integrated ALL instruction provides. One group of students that frequently seek additional assistance are mature age English speaking background (ESB) students with low levels of secondary education or education that took place in the distant past. Another significant group are of non-English speaking background (NESB) students who have sophisticated language skills, often speaking two or more languages, but an inadequate command of English. Some of these are international students, while others are local students of migrant backgrounds. In enrolling such students, universities have a responsibility to maximise their likelihood of success by providing flexible support mechanisms. ALL centres/units provide high quality ALL programs that respond flexibly to students' need for additional language and academic literacy support, albeit with inadequate resources.

Given that graduate attributes stress communication skills, it makes sense to map communication skills and scaffold them throughout a degree program. This leads to higher standards of literacy development as well as to more effective acquisition and development of discipline-specific discourses.

Discipline-specific credit bearing units or subjects integrated across the curriculum and available to all students were seen by the majority of respondents as the most effective educational strategy aimed at developing university students' academic language and communication competence.

At some universities, the implementation of such cross-curriculum integrated ALL provision is underscored by university-wide policies and procedures. Responses from many ALL professionals indicated that the key to a successful implementation of integrated ALL provision is:

- collaboration between ALL professionals and Faculty/programs;
- the need for course mapping of in-discipline literacy development (academic and language);
- effective and sustained staff development activities; and
- research projects aimed at informing the implementation of, and supporting integrated ALL provision.

Two examples of university wide integration of ALL are included in **appendix c** and **appendix d**.

3.3.2 Monitoring, support and ongoing assessment of English-language proficiency

Some universities are also implementing post-enrolment diagnostic ALL assessments to both enable early intervention strategies and to inform the curriculum of discipline based units or subjects. Other universities are exploring the use of such assessments. Currently, approximately 18 Australian universities, are either using Post-Enrolment Diagnostic Academic Language Assessment (PEDALA) or preparing to introduce such assessment in the near future.

Some universities have for some years used PEDALA for specific cohorts of students, often in compulsory mode. For example, all first year Pharmacy students (University of Sydney), selected international students (University of Wollongong), all first year Engineering students (University of Western Australia), all international students (University of NSW - ADFA) are required to undertake assessment.

At other universities, PEDALA is an integral component of compulsory subjects, for example, all first year undergraduate IT and Engineering and all postgraduate IT and Accounting students (University of Technology, Sydney), all commencing undergraduate students (Murdoch University, Charles Darwin University). In some cases, a university strongly recommends to faculties that they make PEDALA compulsory for their undergraduate students (University of NSW).

The University of Melbourne has extensive experience in PEDALA, but to date it has largely been used on a voluntary basis. From 2009, however, this university's *Diagnostic English Language Assessment (DELA)* becomes compulsory for students with:

- less than 7.0 IELTS or equivalent;
- less than 30 VCE English;
- less than 35 VCE ESL English.

Students must take up the recommended support, and this support must fit within the student's current program (i.e., cannot add time to their studies).

The University of Auckland in New Zealand has been using a two-phased PEDALA (screening and diagnosing) similar to the University of Melbourne's DELA and is considering making it compulsory for all students from 2009.

A number of other universities are also trialling PEDALA (such as Curtin University) or are planning to introduce PEDALA in the near future (Edith Cowan University, RMIT, University of South Australia, Swinburne University, University of Southern Queensland, University of Technology, Sydney, University of Western Sydney and Victoria University).

While there is support for post-entry diagnostic assessment, this is predicated on a clear understanding:

- of what is being assessed;

- of the benefits and purpose of assessment being clearly explained to students so that they see it as a positive procedure, not a remediation or a hurdle (test);
- that if diagnostic assessment is implemented, there must be clear, supported follow-up mechanisms to develop students' English language, including the collaboration of ALL experts and discipline academics; and
- that compliance must be taken seriously.

3.3.3 Other

Many responses strongly supported the provision of **peer-mentoring** and **individual assistance**, provided they are adequately resourced. The strong links and levels of collaboration between ALL staff and student service staff (counsellors, academic advisers, etc.) is seen as an effective way of providing a broad range of personal and academic support to students in need.

Individual assistance is currently available to students at all Australian universities. Internal arrangements for this provision vary from a 'drop-in' service which may be provided by library staff to a structured appointment system which may supplement existing integrated ALL provision.

While several respondents are in favour of ensuring adequacy of outcomes at exit points for further study, employment or immigration, the suggestion to use an **exit language assessment or test** (e.g., IELTS) was strongly rejected. Reasons given were that students would cram for this to the detriment of their university studies and that students/employers may be misled by test results.

Outcomes should be assessed in the context of curriculum (through regular assessment of ALL and communication, embedded in mainstream courses) rather than via outside indicators and with an effective strategy to ensure adequate outcomes, particularly if employment-related communication were to integrate graduate attributes and embed the development of these attributes in courses.

In some responses, the **appointment of much-needed additional ALL staff** was proposed as the best example of 'current good practice', as these additional staff were seen to increase the potential of collaborating with more faculties to implement ALL support within disciplines.

Several respondents included examples of **on-line ALL support** to supplement other ALL related practices and resources. The table of ALL centres/units (**appendix a**) includes the website for each ALL centre/unit.

Several universities also provide **cross-cultural programs** (many on a voluntary basis) to enable students to meet, communicate and network with community groups.

3.4. The significance of other language-related matters, such as cultural knowledge (both general and educational), acculturation, socialisation and academic study skills

Overall, many responses were in favour of developing strategies to integrate cultural knowledge into the curriculum to assist the transition of students from their culture to that of Australian universities.

3.5. Suggested good practice principles for English language proficiency in academic studies.

The question of who is responsible for addressing ALL needs is summarised below.

- DEEWR is responsible for quality assurance framework standards, especially for tertiary institution pathways and compliance with those standards.

- Universities need to develop institution-wide policies and procedures addressing ALL requirements.
- Tertiary institutions are responsible for adequately resourcing systematic on-going academic language and learning assistance to meet graduate attributes in communication.
- Faculties are responsible for ethical admission practices, and for resourcing students who are admitted without meeting basic proficiency levels.
- Faculties need to develop, in consultation with ALL staff, educational and curriculum strategies to ensure that discipline-specific ALL approaches are integrated across their degrees, and ensure that:
 - an appropriate level of English language proficiency is required on enrolment;
 - academic language and communicative competence are essential parts of assessment;
 - English language proficiency is the business of all staff;
 - agreed minimum academic language competence standards should be expected and maintained; and
 - resources for assessing and enhancing academic language competence are shared.
- Discipline-specific ALL requirements need to be made explicit to students through their courses and by faculty academics, and students need to be provided with the means of addressing their ALL needs within the curriculum. Students must be committed to study and to improving their literacy.
- There should be increased recognition of the ALL profession.

4. Recommendations

The Association for Academic Language and Learning fully endorses the actions proposed by the August 2007 *National Symposium: English Language Competence of International Students* and welcomes the outcomes and initiatives resulting from this symposium.

In addition, the Association for Academic Language and Learning submits the following recommendations to the *Good Practice Principles for English Language Proficiency* steering committee for its consideration. AALL recommends that:

1. Adequate resourcing be provided to strengthen existing Academic Language and Learning services and new initiatives be supported to meet all university students' developmental and remedial academic language and learning needs.
2. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) develop policies, procedures and guidelines to assist universities provide adequate academic language and learning assistance to students for the duration of their studies in Australia.
3. DEEWR develop policies and guidelines regarding minimum quality standards to ensure that, across the Australian university sector:
 - minimum English language proficiency standards are uniform and consistent;
 - adequately resourced ALL services are consistently available.
4. A national quality framework be implemented for Foundation/ACCESS/ELICOS pathways with compliance built in.
5. Evaluation procedures regarding Academic Language and Learning matters be included in the institutional reviews conducted by the Australian University Quality Agency (AUQA).
6. Tertiary education sector-wide approaches be developed and implemented by universities which support:

- orientation and preparation for university study;
 - post-enrolment diagnostic language assessment;
 - discipline specific academic language and learning support integrated across the curriculum and for the length of students' studies;
 - concurrent staff development programs; and
 - national benchmarking, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.
7. National research be funded in consultation with universities, pathway course providers, the *Association for Academic Language & Learning* and other professional bodies to:
 - compare courses of different pathway providers as indicators of appropriate levels of university entry and academic success;
 - track the development of university students' ALL from pre-university (secondary schools in Australia or overseas, pathway, other points of exit) to graduation and employment; and
 - inform institutional curriculum policies and national monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of ALL practices.
 8. The *Association for Academic Language & Learning* be supported in its initiatives to become the central hub and clearing house for ALL related resources, research and professional matters, to enable cross-institutional sharing and collaborative projects.
 9. National minimum standards, guidelines and procedures be developed and implemented to ensure consistent recruitment and promotion of Academic Language and Learning staff.
 10. Stronger inter-institutional links and quality assurance mechanisms be developed between sending pathway institutions and receiving universities, including professional development training and exchanges between staff of both institutions – particularly between ALL staff based in tertiary institutions, and pathway staff.
 11. A coherent national university-wide policy and approach to English language entry standards be developed collaboratively between those who make the offers to students, faculties, Academic Language and Learning professionals, in consultation with IELTS and other professional bodies.
 12. All Australian Universities adopt a uniform *minimum* English language entry requirement, as recommended by IELTS, viz 6.5 with no sub-score below 6.0
 13. Individual faculties examine students' outcomes data and use these to set English language entry standards for students. English language entry requirements should be tailored to meet the needs of particular courses: that is, some courses require higher levels of English language than others; for example, law, medicine and nursing.
 14. The Australian government standard for the period in which an IELTS score is valid for entry to Australian tertiary institutions be reduced from two years to one, as proficiency can be lost over time.

July 2008

Academic Language & Learning staff from the following universities contributed to this submission:

1. Australian Catholic University
2. Australian National University
3. Charles Sturt University
4. Curtin University
5. Deakin University
6. Edith Cowan University
7. La Trobe University
8. Monash University
9. Murdoch University
10. Queensland University of Technology
11. RMIT University
12. Southern Cross University
13. Swinburne University
14. University of Adelaide
15. Flinders University
16. University of Canberra
17. University of Melbourne
18. University of New South Wales
19. University of New South Wales – ADFA
20. University of Newcastle
21. University of Queensland
22. University of South Australia
23. University of Southern Queensland
24. University of Sydney
25. University of Technology, Sydney
26. University of Western Australia
27. University of Western Sydney
28. University of Wollongong
29. Victoria University

appendix a: Academic Language & Learning (ALL) centres/units – Australian universities – updated: November 2008

University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academic staff : stud. ratio
1. Australian Catholic University (ACU National) 2006 total students*: 14 000 overseas students: 16%	Academic Skills Unit (ASU)¹ Student Services, Dean of Students	Pat HACKER, Manager	patricia.hacker@acu.edu.au	03 9953 3815	http://my.acu.edu.au/22033	10.5 G 1: 1 300
2. Australian National University (ANU) 2006 total students*: 14 600 overseas students: 21%	Academic Skills & Learning Centre (ASLC)¹ Registrar & Student Services Academic Skills Advisers , Crawford School, College of Asia & Pacific	Annie BARTLETT, Director Alison CUMMING-THOM, Coordinator, T&L support	annie.bartlett@anu.edu.au Alison.cumming-thom@anu.edu.au	02 6125 2972 02 6125 3802	http://academicskills.anu.edu.au/ http://www.crawford.anu.edu.au/	7.0 G 4.5 G 4.0 G 1: 950
3. Bond University Qld 2006 total students*: 4 600 overseas students: 42%	English Help Centre¹ and Faculties Faculty Deans	Susan MACFARLANE, Manager	susan_macfarlane@bond.edu.au	07 5595 2676	http://www.bond.edu.au/hss/englishhelp/index.html	3.5 G 0.5 A 1: 1 150
4. Central Queensland University (CQU) 2006 total students*: 25 300 overseas students: 54%	Communications Learning Centre (CLC)¹ Educational Services & Learning Support	Julie WILLANS, Head	j.willans@cqu.edu.au	07 4930 9294	http://clc.cqu.edu.au	10.0 A 12.7 G 1: 1 100
5. Charles Darwin University (CDU) 2006 total students*: 5 400 overseas students: 4%	Common Unit Academic Literacies, LearnLink¹ DVC, T & L	Nicola ROLLS, contact Ruth WARWICK, Academic Support Facilitator	Nicola.rolls@cdu.edu.au ruth.warwick@cdu.edu.au	08 8946 6142 08 8946 7197	http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/commonunits/ http://www.cdu.edu.au/ehs/caes/	6.0 A 1: 900
6. Charles Sturt University (CSU) 2006 total students*: 34 100 overseas students: 21%	Learning, Access & Support¹ DVC Admin.	Liz SMITH, Manager	elsmith@csu.edu.au	02 6338 4325	www.csu.edu.au/division/studserv/learning	13.0 G 1: 2 600
7. Curtin University of Technology (CUT) 2006 total students*: 39 500	Student Learning Support Centre (SLSC)¹ (PVC Academic) Communication Skills Centre¹ Dean T&L Business School Department of Languages & Intercultural Education (DOLIE)² Communications Skills¹	Katrina DOBOS Carmela BRIGUGLIO, Manager Steve PAVEY, UG Coordinator Jane GRELLIER, Katalin	k.dobos@curtin.edu.au carmela.briguglio@cbs.curtin.edu.au S.Pavey@curtin.edu.au ccs.commskills@exchange.curtin.edu.au	08 9266 2290 08 9266 3079 08 9266 7697	http://www.learningsupport.curtin.edu.au www.cbs.curtin.edu.au/communication	4.0 A 1.0 G 3.4 A 1.0 A 1.2 A

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University faculty/campus	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
overseas students: 42%	Fac. Media, Society & Culture	DOBOS, Coords.		08 9266 7739		1: 3 700
2006 student enrolments* overseas student %						
8. Deakin University	Transition & Study Skills ¹	Mandy BISHOP, Manager	mbishop@deakin.edu.au	03 5227 2953	http://www.deakin.edu.au/study-success	9.0 G
2006 total students*: 33 200 overseas students: 20%						1: 3 700
9. Edith Cowan University	ECU Learning Centre ¹ Student Services, PVC (T&L)	Kuki SINGH, a/Manager, Student Retention & Support	k.singh@ecu.edu.au	08 6304 5277	http://www.ecu.edu.au/student/student-learning//	5.0 G
Mt Lawley, Joondalup, South West campus						
2006 total students*: 24 000 overseas students: 18%						1: 4 800
10. Flinders University	Student Learning Centre (SLC) ¹ Director, Academic & Student Services Division, DVC(Academic)	Dr Salah KUTIELEH, Head	salah.kutieleh@flinders.edu.au	08 8201 2518	http://www.flinders.edu.au/SLC	7.0 A
2006 total students*: 15 400 overseas students: 19%						1: 2 200
11. Griffith University	Learning Services (LS) ¹ Director, Information Services	Lynne RUSSELL, Manager	l.russell@griffith.edu.au	07 3735 7987	www.griffith.edu.au/ins/learningservices	7.6 G
2006 total students*: 35 000 overseas students: 24%						1: 1 100
12. James Cook University (JCU)	Learning Centre (LC) ¹ Teaching & Learning Development	Peter HANLEY, Alan CALDER, Learning Advisers	peter.hanley@jcu.edu.au alan.calder@jcu.edu.au	07 4781 5364 07 4042 1146	http://www.jcu.edu.au/studyskills	3.0 G 1.0 A
2006 total students*: 15 400 overseas students: 18%						1: 3 800
13. La Trobe University Bundoora	Language & Academic Skills (ESL) Unit ¹ Director, Academic Development Unit	Jennie LYNCH, Coordinator	jennie.lynch@latrobe.edu.au	03 9479 2788	http://www.latrobe.edu.au/learning/lasunits (website for all La Trobe units, linking to each unit)	13.2 A institution wide
Faculties	Humanities Academic Skills Unit (HASU) ¹ Fac. Humanities	Kate CHANOCK, Coordinator	c.chanock@latrobe.edu.au	03 9479 2535		
	Language & Academic Skills Unit (LASU) ¹ Fac. Law & Mgt.	Robyn THOMAS, Coordinator	r.thomas@latrobe.edu.au	03 9479 2665		
	Language & Academic Skills (LAS) ¹ , Fac. Science, Technology & Engineering	Meg ROSSE, Head	m.rosse@latrobe.edu.au	03 9479 2432		
	Study Skills Assistance Scheme (SSAS) ¹ , Fac. Health Sciences	Jane McCOOEY,	J.McCoey@latrobe.edu.au	03 9479 5570		
	School of Educational Studies ¹	Ruth SHRENSKY	r.shrensky@latrobe.edu.au	03 5440 9664		
Bendigo Albury/Wodonga	Academic Skills Unit ¹ : Deputy PVC OED Albury Wodonga ¹	Bernadette BENNETT	b.bennett@latrobe.edu.au	03 5444 7242 02 6024 9772		1: 2 100
2006 total students*: 28 300 overseas students: 17%						

ALL Centres – Australian universities

APPENDIX 2

University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
14. Macquarie University 2006 total students*: 31 100 overseas students: 32%	Communication for Academic & Professional Purposes (CAPP) ¹	Jean BRICK, Coordinator	jean.brick@ling.mq.edu.au,	02 9850 9664		1.0 A
	1st year Student Support ¹ , Environmental & Life Sciences	Sandie RUDMAN, Student Support Officer	sandie.rudman@mq.edu.au	02 9850 6839		0.6 G
	International Study Skills ¹	Cheng-Choo KHOO, Intl Study Skills Adviser	Cheng-choo.khoo@io.mq.edu.au	02 9850 6320		1.0 G
	Writing Skills Program ¹	Sue SPINKS, Coordinator, Michael LEWIS, Writing Skills Adviser	sue.spinks@ling.mq.edu.au Michael.lewis@ling.mq.edu.au	02 9850 8770 02 9850 7856		1.0 A 1.0 A
	PG Writing & Communication Skills Program (Linguistics) ¹	Tessa GREEN, Academic Skills & Projects Coordinator	tessa.green@ling.mq.edu.au	02 9850 6875		1.0 G 1: 5 600
15. Monash University Clayton Faculties 2006 total students*: 54 800 overseas students: 31%	Learning Skills Unit (LSU) ¹ Director Client Services, Library	Leanne McCANN, Learning Skills Manager	leanne.mccann@lib.monash.edu.au	03 9903 4945	http://www.lib.monash.edu.au/learning-skills	17.0 G
	Research Student Academic Support ² Engineering Faculty	Jane MOODIE	jane.moodie@eng.monash.edu.au	03 9905 5488		2.0 A
	Arts, Academic Language & Learning Unit ²	?			http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/lis/index.html	3.0 A
	Education, Academic Language & Study Skills ²	?			http://www.education.monash.edu.au/students/current/resources/englishlanguagesup.html	2.0 A 1.0 G
	Medicine ²	Sheila VANCE				4.0 A 1: 1 890
16. Murdoch University 2006 total students*: 13 900 overseas students: 17%	Teaching & Learning Centre (TLC) ² Student Learning Section	Marian KEMP, Head	M.Kemp@murdoch.edu.au	08 9360 2854	http://www.tlc.murdoch.edu.au/slearn/	8.0 A 1: 1 700
17. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) 2006 total students*: 37 500 overseas students: 14%	Teaching & Learning Support Services 2 Academic Skills Advisers	?		07 3138 8528	www.talss.qut.edu.au	2.0 G
	Langue & Learning 2 (International Student Services)	Peter NELSON, Coordinator	p.nelson@qut.edu.au	07 3864 2135	www.iss@qut.edu.au	4.0 G 1: 6 200

University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
18. RMIT (+ TAFE) 2006 total students*: 60 200 overseas students: 39%	Study & Learning Centre (SLC) ¹ Student Services Group/PVC-Students	Judy MAXWELL, contact	judy.maxwell@rmit.edu.au	03 9925 4009	http://www.rmit.edu.au/studyandlearningcentre/	14.8 A 1: 4 100
19. Southern Cross University 2006 total students*: 13 900 overseas students: 18%	Learning Assistance Unit (LAU) ¹ Deputy Vice-Chancellor	Jennifer McGUIRE, a/Head	Jennifer.mcguire@scu.edu.au	02 6620 3179	http://www.scu.edu.au/services/la/	5.2 A 1: 2 700
20. Swinburne University TAFE: 35 300; o/s 5% HE: 13 000; o/s 38% 2006 total students*: 54 800 overseas students: 12%	Study Support Program Access Department for local students ¹ (for local Ss in TAFE & HE) TAFE School of Social Sciences Language & Academic Skills (LAS) Program (for international Ss in TAFE & HE) ¹ TAFE International	Bett NORMAN Mary Lou RIDSDALE	enorman@swin.edu.au mridsdale@swin.edu.au	03 9214 6550 03 9214 5583	http://www.tafe.swin.edu.au/socsi/access/studysupport.htm http://www.international.swinburne.edu/current/support/las/index.html	5.5 A 4.5 A 1: 5 500
21. University of Adelaide (UA) 2006 total students*: 19 300 overseas students: 23%	Academic Learning & Language (ALL) ¹ Centre for Learning & Professional Development, DVC & VP (Academic) Researcher Education & Development ¹ DVC & VP (Research) Professions Learning Centre Medecine Learning & Teaching Unit School of Mechanical Engineering	Deb COLEMAN- GEORGE, Coordinator Margaret CARGILL, Coordinator Nishani SINGH Helen FRASER Karen ADAMS	Deborah.colemangeorge@adelaide.edu.au Margaret.cargill@adelaide.edu.au Nishani.sing@adelaide.edu.au Helen.fraser@adelaide.edu.au karen.adams@adelaide.edu.au	08 8303 3019 08 8303 6033 08 8303 8354 08 8303 3131 08 8303 7021	http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/lis/ http://www.adelaide.edu.au/graduatecentre/rep/ http://www.Adelaide.edu.au/professions/plc/ http://www.health.adelaide.edu.au http://www.mecheng.adelaide.edu.au/	3.0 A 4.2 A 2.6 G 1.0 A 2.5 A 1: 1 451
22. University of Ballarat 2006 total students*: 10 400 overseas students: 53%	International Student Learning Support ¹ Domestic Students Learning Skills ¹	Talia BARRETT, Intl Student Acad. Adviser Bronwyn BLAIKLOCK, Learning Skills Officer	t.barrett@ballarat.edu.au b.blaiklock@ballarat.edu.au	03 5327 9868 03 5327 9378	http://www.ballarat.edu.au/learningskills	1.0 A 1.7 G 1: 3 900
23. University of Canberra (UC) 2006 total students*: 10 900 overseas students: 22%	Academic Skills Program (ASP) ¹ Head, Division of Learning & Teaching	Kate WILSON, Head	Kate.Wilson@canberra.edu.au	02 6201 2205	http://www.canberra.edu.au/studyskills/	6.0 A 1: 1 800

ALL Centres – Australian universities

University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
24. University of Melbourne 2006 total students*: 43 400 overseas students: 21%	Academic Skills Unit (ASU) ¹ Director, Academic Enrichment Services	Laurie RANSOM, Manager	lransom@unimelb.edu.au	03 8344 0930	http://www.services.unimelb.edu.au/lisu/	0.6 A 9.7 G
	Teaching & Learning Unit ² Fac. Economics & Commerce	Kim WATTY, Director	kwatty@unimelb.edu.au	03 8344-7453	http://tlu.ecom.unimelb.edu.au	7.0 A 7.0 G
	International Student Support Prog ¹ Fac Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences	Robyn WOODWARD- KRON, Director	robynwk@unimelb.edu.au	03 8344 9132	http://www.mdhs.unimelb.edu.au/aboutus/structure/admin/fiu/ssupport.html	4.8 A 1: 1 500
25. University of New England (UNE) 2006 total students*: 17 500 overseas students: 10%	Academic Skills Office (ASO) ² Director, T & L Centre	Robyn MULDOON, Coordinator	rmuldoon@une.edu.au	02 6773 2836	www.une.edu.au/tlc/aso	3.0 A 1: 5 800
26. University of New South Wales - Kensington UNSW, Australian School of Business 2006 total students*: 38 800 overseas students: 20%	The Learning Centre (LC) ¹ PVC (Students)	Sue STARFIELD, Director	s.starfield@unsw.edu.au	02 9385 3369	http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/	5.7 G
	Education Development Unit ² A/Dean, UG Programs & Education	Carolyn COUSINS, contact	c.cousins@unsw.edu.au	02 9385 6105	http://business.unsw.edu.au	3.7 G 1: 4 100
University of NSW – ADFA – ACT 2006 total students*: 2 500 overseas students: 6%	Academic Language & Learning (ALL) Unit ¹ Head, School of Human. & Soc Sciences	Fiona COTTON, Coordinator	f.cotton@adfa.edu.au	02 6268 8912	http://www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/all	2.0 A 1: 1 250
27. University of Newcastle Ourimbah Campus 2006 total students*: 25 600 overseas students: 18%	Learning Support Program (LSP) ² Centre for T&L, DVC Academic	Rosalind SMITH, a/Coordinator	rosalind.smith@Newcastle.edu.au	02 4921 6606	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/unit/ctl/lsp/	3.8 G
	Learning Development Service (LSU) ² Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning	Sarah O'SHEA, Head Teacher	sarah.oshea@Newcastle.edu.au	02 4348 4060	http://www.newcastle.edu.au/campus/ourimbah/learningdevelopment/index.html	1.0 G 1: 5 300
28. University of Notre Dame 2006 total students*: 5 600 overseas students: 13%	Academic Support ² Student Life Office	Rosalba DAVIES, Coordinator	rdavies4@nd.edu.au	08 9433 0168		6.0 A 1: 900

ALL Centres – Australian universities

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University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
29. University of Queensland (UQ) 2006 total students*: 37 200 overseas students: 17%	Learning Assistance ¹ Learning Hub	Janey SAUNDERS, Manager	j.saunders2@uq.edu.au	07 3365 1237	http://www.uq.edu.au/student-services	5.5 G 1: 6 800
30. University of South Australia (UniSA) 2006 total students*: 33 400 overseas students: 31%	Learning Connection ¹ (Learning Advisers) Teaching & Learning Services, Flexible Learning Centre	Liz HORROCKS, Team Leader	liz.horrocks@unisa.edu.au	08 8302 2172	http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/	9.0 A 3.2 A 1: 2 700
31. University of Southern Queensland (USQ) 2006 total students*: 25 200 overseas students: 36%	Research Education Advisers ¹ Academic Learning Support ¹ Learning & Teaching Support Unit (LTSU)	Di BILLS Janet TAYLOR, Coordinator	dianne.bills@unisa.edu.au taylorja@usq.edu.au	08 83023417 07 4631 2821	http://www.unisanet.unisa.edu.au/learningconnection/ http://www.usq.edu.au/learnteach	4.5 A 1: 5 600
32. University of Sydney faculties 2006 total students*: 45 800 overseas students: 21%	Learning Centre (LC) ¹ Office of the Dep. Provost, Learning & Teaching & Pro Vice-Chancellor Office for Learning & Teaching in Economics & Business (OLTEB) ² Dean	Janet JONES, Head Mark FREEMAN, Director	janet.jones@usyd.edu.au m.freeman@econ.usyd.edu.au	02 9351 7035 02 9036 5030	http://www.usyd.edu.au/lc www.econ.usyd.edu.au/tandl	6.2 A 1.6 G 2.0 A 1: 5 200
33. University of Tasmania 2006 total students*: 17 500 overseas students: 22%	Centre for the Advancement of Learning & Teaching (CALT) ¹ PVC (T&L) EnglishAssist ¹ Faculty of Business, Dean ¹	Gail HART, a/Director Rainie DOUGLAS, Launceston Louise OXLEY, Hobart Marian MAY	D.J.Johnston@utas.edu.au rainie.douglas@utas.edu.au Louise.oxley@utas.edu.au Marian.May@utas.edu.au	03 6226 1907 03 6226 7251 03 6234 3735 03 6226 1939	http://www.utas.edu.au/calt/ http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/business/business/people.asp	2.0 A 1.7 A 1.0 A 1: 3 700
34. University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) 2006 total students*: 32 700 overseas students: 26%	ELSSA Centre ¹ DVC (Teaching, Learning & Equity)	Alex BARTHEL, Director	alex.barthel@uts.edu.au	02 9514 2325	www.elssa.uts.edu.au	9.1 A 1: 3 600
35. University of the Sunshine Coast - Qld 2006 total students*: 5 800 overseas students: 18%	Student Services, Academic Skills ² Director, Student Services	Margot REEH Academic Skills Adviser	mreeh@usc.edu.au	07 5430 1229	http://www.usc.edu.au/Students/Future/StudentSupport/AcademicSkillsProgram/	2.7 G 1: 2 100

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University faculty/campus 2006 student enrolments* overseas student %	Name of ALL centre / unit / program (acronym) Organisational position/reporting line	Coordinator, Head, Director, Manager or contact person	e-mail	phone	web page	number of General / Academi c staff : stud. ratio
36. University of Western Australia (UWA) 2006 total students*: 17 800 overseas students: 18%	Learning, Language & Research Skills (LLRS) ¹ Director, Student Services Division	Siri BARRETT- LENNARD, Lisa CLUETT	siri.barrett-lennard@uwa.edu.au lisa.cluett@uwa.edu.au	08 9380 2423	www.studysmarter.uwa.edu.au	6.0 G 1: 3 000
37. University of Western Sydney (UWS) 2006 total students*: 32 900 overseas students: 16%	Student Learning Unit (SLU) ¹ PVC (T&L)	Janice CATTERALL, Head	j.catterall@uws.edu.au	02 4736 0850	http://www.uws.edu.au/lisu	8.0 A 1: 4 100
38. University of Wollongong 2006 total students*: 21 900 overseas students: 40%	Learning Development (LD) ¹ Sandra WILLS a/Head DVC (Academic & International)	Bronwyn JAMES, Coordinator	bjames@uow.edu.au	02 4221 3213	http://www.uow.edu.au/student/services/ld/overview/index.html	11.0 A 1: 2 000
39. Victoria University TAFE: 30 000; o/s 4% HE: 20 000; o/s 20% 2006 total students*: 50 000 overseas students: 10%	School of Learning Support Services (LSS) ¹ PVC (T&L), Student Learning Service	Julie DIXON, Head	Julie.Dixon@vu.edu.au	03 9919 4410	http://tls.vu.edu.au/college/portfolio/vuc_areas/lss.html	6.7 A 1: 7 500
all universities* 2006 total students*: 1 049 500* overseas students: 26%*	¹ updated June - November 2008 ² updated 2006 - 2007				total academic ALL staff: total general ALL staff: total ALL staff: average ALL staff:student ratio: range (lowest to highest):	205 A 57% 158 G 43% 363 100% 1 : 2 890 1 : 900 to to 1 : 7 500
compiled by: updated:	alex.barthel@uts.edu.au for AALL Inc. November 2008					

* latest update available: DEST, Students 2006 [full year]: selected higher education statistics, http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/higher_education/publications_resources/profiles/students_2006_selected_higher_education_statistics.htm

**Academic Language & Learning (ALL) centres/units – Australian universities
– updated, November 2008**

a few notes about the current update

Overall this table attempts to capture the provision of Academic Language & Learning (ALL) services available across the Australian university sector, which, as the table shows, varies considerably in nature, size, structural organisation and status of ALL staff across the 39 universities listed in the table. The information provided here is as accurate and complete as what was provided by the contact people at the 39 institutions by July 2008. Where no update was provided, 2006/2007 information was used. For consistency sake student enrolment figures were taken from the most recent (2006) DEEWR data. In the case of several Victorian universities, TAFE students were added to the university enrolments at institutions where ALL staff service both university and TAFE students.

This table is available on the website of the **Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL)**, at www.aall.org.au

column 1

University, faculty/campus, 2006 student enrolments, overseas student % (latest available complete DEEWR update)

This includes the name of each university and, where relevant, the name of faculties and/or campuses, if different ALL services have been reported. Student enrolment numbers and percentages of international students are those provided by DEEWR and may differ from those provided by universities.

column 2

Name of ALL centre/unit/program (acronym), organisational position/reporting line
Each centre/program unit is listed and, where the information was provided, the person (position) (eg. PVC = Pro Vice-Chancellor) and/or organisational unit (eg Centre for Learning & Teaching) the ALL centre/program/staff report to. The superscript numbers mean: ¹ = updated in July 2008, either through direct contact with staff and/or through website information; ² = last updated in 2006/2007.

column 3

coordinator, head, director, manager or contact person

Name of one of these and their position, or a person willing to be contacted about ALL activities at her/his institution.

columns 4 & 5

e-mail & phone of the person(s) in column 3

column 6

web page of the ALL program or a broader field (ALL staff development, etc.)

column 7

status General/Academic staff, staff : student ratio

Number of staff reported and/or listed on ALL centre/program website or reported by contact people, and their status (G = general staff, A = academic staff). This number mainly includes full-time and/or permanent fractional staff. The ALL staff : student ratio is obtained by dividing the total enrolments by the total number of ALL staff reported at each university.

the figures (last page of the table)

As the main purpose of the table is to provide a quantitative **overview** rather than an in-depth **analysis** of the ALL provision across the Australian university sector, all figures reported here need to be taken with a grain of salt: some universities may not have reported every ALL staff, particularly casual staff or ALL staff working in faculties, others may have proportionally fewer ALL staff because they have either few overseas students and/or offer more distance education programs than others, service students differently, etc.

alex.barthel@uts.edu.au
November 2008

APPENDIX 2

appendix b - Academic Language and Learning activities - July 2008

Each of the 39 Australian universities has at least one Academic Language and Learning (ALL) unit or centre. This unit is most commonly structurally located within a wider Teaching and Learning Centre or within the Student Service division and reports indirectly (through a Centre/Division Director) or directly, to a DVC/PVC (Teaching and Learning). In addition to a central unit, at 13 universities, some faculties (usually larger ones - eg Business/ Economics -) have their one ALL unit/centre, each employing one or more ALL staff. By the end of 2007, the 39 Australian universities reported a total of 75 ALL units/centres. An estimated 400 full-time/permanent ALL staff are employed across the 39 universities. Most of these (60%) are employed as academic staff (Barthel, 2007). The vast majority of ALL centres/units also employ casual/sessional ALL staff who in many cases do most of the teaching. These ALL staff 'service' over 1 million students, of which 26% come from overseas (DEST, 2007).

In 2007, the Association for Academic Language & Learning (AALL) funded a project to complete a preliminary benchmarking of ALL professional practices by surveying ALL centres/units as to the practices they engage in. Responses were received from 44 (59%) of the 75 ALL units/centres, representing 33 (85%) of the 39 universities.

The 2007 ALL benchmarking project members coded each practice and produced a detailed relational database from which ALL units can generate reports and from which users can obtain information for their own research. The website contains an introduction, overview and bibliography on benchmarking (Dearlove et al. 2007).

The ALL activities most commonly reported were:

- 95% **Student consultations** (face-to-face, on-line, drop-in, phone)
- 95% **Learning & teaching resources, non-integrated with subject** (on-line, print, audio-visual)
- 93% **Workshops** (discipline specific, generic)
- 86% **Subject/course integration** (curriculum development, learning resources, guest lectures, co-teaching)
- 84% **Research/scholarly activities related to ALL practice** (learning issues, grants/awards, teaching evaluations, publications, learning needs analysis)
- 80% **Transition** (academic preparation, orientations, alternative entry)
- 64% **Committee representation and policy development** (at both university and faculty level)
- 59% **Staff development and support** (consultations, workshops, tutor training)
- 57% **Research student support** (general and discipline specific)
- 52% **Courses** (Credit and non-credit)
- 43% **non-ALL focus** (maths, science, computing)
- <33% **Peer mentoring, peer tutoring**

These activities are consistent with findings of other benchmarking reports (Ransom and Greig, 2007) and one of the discussion papers (Arkoudis and Starfield, 2007) commissioned by Australian Education International (AEI) for the 2007 'National symposium: English language competence of international students'.

The table below provides a summary of the benchmarking project and an update (July 2008) of the type of activities provided by ALL units/centres.

- means 'yes' on the basis of information provided by ALL unit/centre or its website. No dot '•' means either 'not applicable' or 'no information available'
- a. **centralised**: the 'central' ALL unit/centre is structurally located outside a faculty and usually reports *indirectly* (through the Director of Student services or the Centre for Learning and Teaching) or *directly* to a PVC/DVC (Teaching & Learning). Each of the 39 universities has at least one central ALL unit
- b. **decentralised**: in addition to a central ALL unit, faculties (often large ones, ie. Economics/Business) at some universities (9) employ ALL professionals directly and/or have their own ALL unit/centre
- c. **integrated credit**: discipline specific *credit bearing* subject(s) embedded within courses, sometimes compulsory, usually owned by faculties and frequently co-developed/co-taught by ALL and faculty staff
- d. **integrated non-credit**: discipline specific *non-credit bearing* subject(s) or workshops embedded within courses, normally non-compulsory, usually developed/taught by ALL staff
- e. **generic credit**: non-discipline specific *credit bearing* subject(s) (eg *Essay Writing 101*), sometimes compulsory, usually available to all students, often as electives, owned by faculties or ALL units and usually developed/taught by ALL staff

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- f. **generic non-credit:** non-discipline specific non-credit bearing courses/workshops, usually available to all students, usually owned by ALL units and usually developed/taught by ALL staff
- g. **support for research students:** courses/workshops available specifically to postgraduate research students
- h. **1:1:** individual appointments and/or drop-in facilities
- i. **educational development:** ALL professionals involved in curriculum and/or staff development activities with faculty staff
- j. **research active:** university where ALL staff are research active and/or expected to be
- k. **ESL tuition:** provision of ESL support to enrolled students (mainly international) with limited English proficiency
- l. **diagnostic assessment:** post-enrolment diagnostic English language assessment of student cohorts

Academic Language & Learning centre/unit activities - Australian universities

University	a. centralised	b. decentralised	c. integrated credit	d. integrated non-credit	e. generic credit	f. generic non-credit	g. support for research Ss	h. 1:1	i. educational development	j. research active	k. ESL tuition#	l. diagnostic assessment#
1 Australian Catholic U ^ *	•			•		•	•	•		•		
2 Australian National U ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•		
3 Bond U ^	•						•	•	•	•		
4 Central Queensland U *	•							•			•	
5 Charles Darwin U ^ *	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
6 Charles Sturt U ^ *	•					•		•	•			
7 Curtin U Technology ^ *	•	•				•	•	•	•	1	•	•
8 Deakin U ^	•			•			•	•	•	•		
9 Edith Cowan U ^ *	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	1	•	•
10 Flinders U *	•			•		•	•	•		•		
11 Griffith U ^ *	•			•		•	•	•		1		
12 James Cook U ^ *	•						•	•	•	1		
13 La Trobe U ^ *	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
14 Macquarie U *	•	•			•		•	•				
15 Monash U ^	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
16 Murdoch U	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•		•
17 Qld U Technology ^	•			•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
18 RMIT ^ *	•		•	•		•	•	•	•		•	
19 Southern Cross U ^ *	•					•		•				
20 Swinburne U ^	•			•				•	•	•		
21 U Adelaide ^ *	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
22 U Ballarat *	•	•				•	•	•			•	•
23 U Canberra ^ *	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
24 U Melbourne ^	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
25 U New England ^	•			•			•	•		•		
26 U New South Wales ^ *	•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•		•
UNSW ADFA ^ *	•		•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•
27 U Newcastle ^	•					•		•				
28 U Notre Dame	•					•		•				
29 U Queensland ^ *	•			•		•	•	•				
30 U South Australia ^ *	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	
31 U Southern Qld ^ *	•			•				•	•	•		•
32 U Sydney ^	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•		•
33 U Tasmania ^ *	•	•					•	•	•		•	
34 U Technology, Sydney ^ *	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
35 U Sunshine Coast ^	•			•			•	•		•		
36 U Western Australia ^ *	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
37 U Western Sydney ^ *	•			•		•	•	•		•	•	•
38 U Wollongong ^ *	•	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•
39 Victoria U ^ *	•					•	•	•	•			
	39	13	13	26	13	28	30	39	26	28	16	15

^ participated in 2007 ALL benchmarking project, (Dearlove, 2007)

these categories were added in July 2008 and were not included in the 2007 ALL benchmarking project

* updated July 2008

1 supported but optional

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appendix c - The UTS ELSSA Centre integrated and collaborative approach in the provision of teaching and learning support at UTS (August 2005)

The goals:

- to maintain best practice in the development of academic language and communication skills at UTS
- to provide effective teaching and learning support through the integration of existing services where possible
- to optimise the use of resources by reaching more students and by providing more intensive support for those students who need it most
- to acculturate faculty lecturers to ensure sustainability of teaching and learning support.

The strategies:

- embedding written and oral communication, information literacy and staff development within undergraduate and graduate courses and within research processes
- systematising and expanding on current processes of embedding
- gradually replacing generic courses and one-to-ones by embedded services
- providing the means for the more systematic acculturation of faculty lecturers
- combining the development of teaching and learning with a practice based approach to certification for faculty lecturers
- shifting perceptions relating to the identity and the work of the ELSSA Centre by means of a name change
- promoting the new strategies in a series of forums endorsed by the university executive

The benefits:

- reaching more students utilising existing resources (a developmental approach)
- targeting the students most in need of support (a remedial approach)
- promoting staff development in the faculties

1. rationale

There are several factors which motivate for the adoption of the proposed approach. The practice oriented approach to education at UTS means that the literacies and forms of communication being promoted are more directly related to workplace practices than those promoted at traditional universities. There is evidence from research and from direct experience of courses at UTS that effective communication is central to workplace practices in the current knowledge economy. It therefore seems important that students be provided with opportunities to develop the appropriate academic and professional literacies through the implementation of a long-term sustainable model. This will be of particular importance in addressing the issue of the acquisition of relevant graduate attributes.

The growth in student numbers, and the potential growth in the number of overseas students, necessitates modes of provision which maintain best practice without a concomitant increase in staffing levels. This is best achieved through the integrated approach to academic literacy development which is already being successfully implemented in certain courses at UTS and at many Australian universities. A more systematic approach would involve faculty lecturers in the promotion of effective communication, and would be best achieved through the collaboration of ELSSA Centre lecturers, the staff developers at the Institute for Multimedia and Learning (IML), the information literacy staff and academics in the Mathematics Study Centre .

The potential benefits of this move towards a more systematised integrated approach go beyond the obvious benefit of achieving more with fewer resources. A greater number of students would be encouraged to develop the necessary metacognitive awareness of the literacies related to workplace and academic practice. Academic staff, too, would have the opportunity to reflect on and enhance their teaching and assessment practices, and possibly to achieve practice-based certification.

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2. a model for an integrated, collaborative approach to teaching communication

a. making existing processes visible

The ELSSA Centre currently has in place some aspects of the proposed model, e.g. academic reading and writing practices are integrated into the Faculties of Design, Architecture & Building, Engineering, Humanities & Social Sciences, IT, Nursing, Midwifery & Health, the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism and spoken communication is offered in the Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery & Health. However, these existing processes of integrating literacy tend to be invisible and have had little impact in some faculties. This model makes visible ways in which academic literacy can be integrated and ways in which students in need of intensive support can be identified and offered programs which meet their needs

b. linking processes to other units in the university

The model would take the process of integration further, to encourage collaboration between faculty lecturers, ELSSA Centre lecturers, academic staff developers and library staff, in the design of assessment tasks, and in integrating academic literacy and information literacy strategies and skills within subjects.

c. linking processes to the process of academic acculturation

Academic staff who undertake to develop subjects explicitly incorporating academic literacy could be offered credit towards the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education.

d. systemising and expanding some existing processes and reducing some ELSSA Centre services

The model builds on current best practice of integrating academic literacy in a developmental way. It also offers a systematic method for providing intensive support to students who most need it, by using assessment tasks to identify these students.

In brief the model for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework consists of the following steps (also, see diagram):

- *Embedding academic literacy*: academic literacy is embedded into at least one first-year subject in all degrees so that all students are introduced to the reading, writing and speaking practices required in their degree program and workplaces where relevant (e.g. in those subjects which contain a practicum). The subject in which academic literacy is integrated is collaboratively designed by a team consisting of the subject coordinator, an ELSSA Centre lecturer, library staff and an academic staff developer.
- *Lectures explicitly addressing academic literacy requirements*: these lectures are integrated into the subject and focus on the reading and writing practices required in the first assessment and ongoing assessments
- *Early identification of students in need of more intensive literacy development*: the first assessment is marked by faculty lecturers who then collaborate with an ELSSA Centre lecturer to identify those students in need of intensive communication development.
- *Intensive literacy development*: a series of intensive workshops specifically designed for these students by ELSSA Centre lecturers is offered after the first assessment task. Following the workshops ELSSA Centre lecturers may recommend individual appointments for some of the students who have attended the workshops.

These steps of the model could be repeated within the same subject as the complexity of assessment tasks increases. The model could also be applied within other subjects in the same degree course when introducing and assessing different types of communication, e.g. speaking in a professional environment, writing a research proposal.

The model is flexible so it can be adopted in ways that suit the needs of the faculty

3. evaluating and reporting processes

An integral component of the model is reporting and evaluating allowing for an iterative cycle of subject design and evaluation, e.g. reports detailing areas of weakness in the first assessment would be prepared by ELSSA Centre academics for faculties, with recommendations on how these weaknesses might be addressed in the subject the following year.

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The embedding processes and intensive workshops would also be evaluated in systematic ways, by means of student satisfaction surveys, amongst other methods.

For postgraduate research students the model is based on similar principles but requires a somewhat different approach. See below.

4. writing development for research postgraduates and academic staff

a. current practices

For research postgraduates, the ELSSA Centre currently offers i) writing workshops through the University Graduate School and in the various faculties, institutes and degree programs, upon the request of the A/Dean Research or program coordinator; and ii) individual consultations upon request.

For academic staff, the ELSSA Centre currently offers i) workshops or sessions on writing and writing development issues, such as giving feedback to students and to (more junior) colleagues on their writing, developing research-writing expertise among students and staff, writing successful grant applications, and writing journal papers for publication; and ii) individual consultations

In one faculty the student workshops are scheduled at the end of each year for the next year, but in other faculties they are scheduled in an ad hoc manner.

b. proposed changes

In line with the goals and strategies outlined in the above section, we propose that the writing development services that the ELSSA Centre provides to research postgraduates and to academics be modified as follows:

- a greater emphasis on the academic staff development, in terms of developing research writing expertise among their students, their colleagues and themselves
- a more systematic and planned approach to integrating writing workshops for students, for example into research methodology subjects where these are required, or into a series of developmental workshops
- a more formalised feedback and reporting system, so that work that we do with students in workshops and individually gets fed back to academic staff, and conversely, work we do with staff in workshops and sessions gets fed back to students
- a greater emphasis on targeting those research students who are most at-risk, for example, by having supervisors refer such students to the ELSSA Centre for workshops, and then having the supervisor (or us) referring those students who still need additional assistance to individual consultations
- a greater emphasis on providing individual consultations primarily (though not exclusively) to research students who are referred to the ELSSA Centre by their supervisor, or by us after they have participated in a workshop (nb: this could not be the case exclusively, as some students would need access to Centre services confidentially, but we could discourage students from using our services unless they have first been to a workshop)
- Academic staff who undertake to participate in workshops for supervisors and/or in developing and running writing workshops for students could be offered credit towards the Graduate Certificate in Higher Education.

5. examples of current academic language and learning subjects integrated in mainstream degree programs

In addition to a range of curriculum structures where academic language and learning is embedded informally through non-credit support workshops, an increasing number of compulsory subjects, all of which include diagnostic academic language assessment are being introduced:

- **Engineering Communication** is a first year core subject for all undergraduate Engineering students. In the first week of semester, students complete a diagnostic language assessment which determines the type of assistance required. The neediest students are referred to another subject, **Language Context For Australian Engineers** taught by ALL academics. The subject focuses on remedial academic language

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aspects, and students need to successfully complete the subject before being permitted to re-enrol in *Engineering Communication* the following semester. This subject is co-taught by Engineering faculty and ALL staff.

- *Communication for IT Professionals* is also a compulsory subject for all undergraduate IT students new to UTS, including all pathway students. Students' academic language is diagnosed in the first week of the subject and they are streamed across 6 – 12 classes, depending on their level of academic English competence. This subject is co-taught by IT faculty and ALL staff. This subject will be supplemented from Autumn 2009 by a *Professional Communication and Management* subject aimed at developing students' work ready communication.
- *IT Research Preparation* is a compulsory subject to be completed by all postgraduate (coursework and research) IT students. The focus of this subject is on academic language aspects required to prepare students for the rigours of postgraduate studies (project management, literature reviews, etc.)
- *Clinically speaking* is a specialised series of workshops aimed at Nursing students identified within their clinical practice placements with considerable oral communication difficulties.
- *Communication Skills for Business* is a compulsory first year subject for students enrolled in the Masters of Professional Accounting (Extended). Over the next 3 semesters of their degree, these students can also complete between one and three subjects focusing on either developing their academic language or work ready communication.

All the above subjects are currently being evaluated and reviewed in view of developing templates for similar subjects to be introduced in other degrees at UTS, from Autumn 2009.

For further information about this project, please contact Alex Barthel, Director, UTS ELSSA Centre.

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appendix d - Good practice in ensuring and supporting English language proficiency at the University of Wollongong (UoW)

- **Identification of students' academic support needs (not only for international students)**

Identification of students' academic support needs ideally begins at the subject and course proposal stages. UoW subject proposal forms (*see figure 1 below*) ask proposers to identify whether that subject will be delivered to cohorts of students who are:

- international students who might require ongoing language development
- at a transition point in their academic program

The subject proposal forms also requests information as to whether the proposed subject:

- will be delivered off shore
- is core in a degree program

Figure 1 excerpt from UoW subject proposal form

LEARNING DEVELOPMENT	Yes	No
Is this a core subject in a particular course?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this subject likely to have a cohort of international students or students from Non English Speaking Backgrounds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are students in this subject at a key transition point where their academic skills are likely to need development (eg transition from one kind of educational institution or type of program to another or returning to education after a significant break)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is this subject going to be offered offshore?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you have answered yes, please contact your faculty Learning Development representative to discuss learning resources and strategies for this cohort of students.		
Signature below indicates appropriate consultation has taken place		
Date/...../.....Head, or delegate, Learning Development		

Subject proposers are then requested to discuss their students' needs in relation to learning outcomes and assessment tasks with a Learning Development representative before the forms are signed and processed. Such a process encourages a proactive approach to identification of student academic support needs. It allows for discussions about students' learning needs in relation to staging curriculum content, assessment practices and feedback and; the development of additional learning and language resources and support built into the subject. Examples and further details of this type of **curriculum-integrated learning support** are provided in **table 2** below.

Specific language needs may also be identified after teaching has commenced, when subject lecturers and co-ordinators are engaging with a cohort of students and developing a clearer picture of which aspects of academic language and learning students experience as particularly difficult – at which time support may be requested from Learning Development.

Students also sometimes independently identify their language development needs, and seek academic language and learning support through individual consultations with Learning Development staff at the Learning Resource Centre. If many students from a particular subject need such assistance, faculty staff and Learning Development staff might collaborate to provide additional support, either within the regular delivery of the subject, or through extra-curricular teaching.

- **Teaching practices or specific projects to assist students to improve their language proficiency**

Learning Development's main approach to assisting students involves **integrating** the teaching of various aspects of academic language communications into faculty curricula, wherever possible, while also maintaining an extra-curricular teaching service that is open to all students, in any faculty and at any level. Linking these areas of operation is a third approach, involving the ongoing development of language and learning development resources, which can be used either within faculty subjects or independently, online and/or in classes.

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Table 1 below provides an overview of the principles informing Learning Development’s approaches to academic literacy and language development. **Table 2** gives a snapshot of some Learning Development activities to support students’ learning, and a sense of how these relate to the principles and strategies identified in **table 1**. Learning Development’s work is informed by the ongoing, practice-related research of this group, often undertaken in collaboration with faculty academics, and by the wider Academic Language and Learning (ALL) profession. Learning Development is actively engaged with the ALL profession and the development of benchmarking models for the evaluation and improvement of academic services in this field.

Principles that inform Learning Development’s teaching practices to assist students to improve academic literacy and language proficiency

Learning Development would like to propose the principles identified below in table 1 for consideration as good practice principles.

Table 1 Principles that inform Learning Development’s teaching practices to assist students to improve academic literacy and language proficiency

Principles	1. The central role of language. Language communication plays an enabling role in higher education, and the assessment of learning in HE usually depends on language. Wherever students’ fluency and familiarity with the specific forms of academic literacy required in a discipline can’t be assumed (which is increasingly often, given the diversity of incoming students and the multiplicity of pathways into some courses and subjects), the development of discipline/profession-specific language should be an explicit focus of teaching .	2. Communication and Context Communication problems that might appear to be linguistic or individual often represent a complexity of factors involved in a learning environment, so instruction needs to anticipate and bridge different worlds (students’ prior experience in language and learning, which forms the initial basis/ framework of their interpretive capacity, is more likely than not to be quite diverse, and different from that of their current teachers).	3. Shared Responsibility and Collaboration International students’ language development needs in HE can be effectively addressed ² through a curriculum-integrated approach, if guidance in the use of academic language is discipline-specific and delivered ‘just-in-time’ (when students’ minds are on specific assessment-related tasks), and there is collaboration between academics in the students’ disciplines and those with expertise in academic language & learning development.
Strategies	Articulate learning outcomes for courses/subjects in terms of conceptual ‘content’ and ‘graduate qualities/skills’.	Make expectations of assessment and learning outcomes explicit and readily accessible throughout the delivery of every subject/ course/ module.	Facilitate communication and collaborative work between teachers in faculty-based and academic language & learning roles.
	Align assessment with instruction, so that the forms of presentation through which student learning is assessed is actually modelled, explained or exemplified in some way.	Provide glossaries for each discipline/subject and easily accessible links to relevant language development resources (seeking advice from academic language & learning professionals).	Model/ exemplify/ guide the various research practices that enable learning a subject (eg key words and synonyms for effective information searching, strategies for efficient reading & critical analysis, writing in specific genres and styles) at the time students are commencing the tasks through which their subject learning is to be assessed.
	Design the learning environment to include adequate opportunities for dialogue and peer learning.	Carefully plan the wording of all instruction, assignments and exams (seeking advice if necessary, eg from academic language & learning professionals)	Provide opportunities within the delivery of subjects for students to develop the literacy practices involved in successful learning and performance.
	Provide easily used tools for students to recognise, reflect on and document their development of ‘skills’ throughout a course/ subject (eg e-portfolio).	Respond to ‘plagiarism’ educationally rather than just punitively.	Gather and share evidence of good practice in facilitating language development.

² Hampton G, Skillen J, Russel W, Robinson S & Trivett N (2003) “Integrating tertiary literacy into the curriculum: effects on performance and retention” at Uniserve Science *Improving Learning Outcomes through Flexible Science Teaching* [<http://science.uniserve.edu.au/pubs/procs/wshop8/outws002.pdf>].

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Examples of integrated approaches and extra curricula approaches to assist students to improve academic literacy and language proficiency

Curriculum-integration				
Example	Principle	Strategy	Detail	Evaluation ³
Commerce 'Embedded literacies' project (Master of Professional Accounting) (ACCY 901,902,903,963)	1, 2, 3	Collaborative, funded, curriculum development project, driven by senior academic management	Systematically planned interventions across a suite of core subjects within a single course, in response to language communication development needs of large cohort of international, LBOTE students. Focusing on assessment practices and teaching strategies as well as resources and integrated supports for learning.	Ongoing focus group interviews with students and teaching staff, monitoring of success and retention rates, peer-reviewed publications.
Informatics 'Employability' project	1, 2, 3	Collaborative, funded, curriculum development project, driven by senior academic management	Collaborative design and delivery of new 'communication skills' subject and other strategies to develop language communication skills of international students at postgraduate level.	(to be introduced 2009).
Business (TBS 985)	1, 2, 3	Language communications subject option	Within Master of International Business	Faculty-based course evaluations and interviews with teaching staff.
Science	1, 2, 3	Core 'basic skills' subjects	Within Master of Science course for international students, focusing on language communications, vocabulary, grammar, literature review writing, report writing, oral presentation, library skills, software, data presentation, maths, lab procedures etc.	(to be introduced 2008).
Science	1, 2, 3	Curriculum integration of language/ learning instruction	Fortnightly thesis writing seminars for Honours students in various disciplines (Environmental science, Chemistry, Biology).	End of semester focus group interviews, comparative statistics on success and retention rates.
Informatics (ECTE 955)	1, 2, 3	Language skills focused assessment task and instruction embedded within core subject	Audio magazine project (15% of subject assessment) / language development tutorials (oral)	Focus group interviews.

³ Evaluation of approaches is notoriously difficult due to the number of factors affecting student learning outcomes. See for example, Arkoudis, S & Starfield, S 2007 'In Course Language Development and Support', discussion paper for National Symposium on English Language Competence of International Students, Barton, ACT, 14/08/2007.

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Informatics (ECTE250/ INFO202)	1,2, 3	Subject integration of language/ learning instruction	<p>Multi-layered approach:</p> <p>1.Embedded learning experiences developed and delivered by subject lecturer and language specialist designed to support a range of academic and work related literacy requirements of the subject (project proposal, industry reports, product brochures, presentations to venture capitalists, team work resources and activities)</p> <p>2. Early small authentic language task that identifies students' needs.</p> <p>3. Additional timetabled workshops to provide extra support for students identified through the language task.</p> <p>Option to resubmit language task at the completion of additional workshops provides students with encouragement to attend.</p>	<p>Positive feedback from subject lecturers for 3rd year indicates that students are more focused in their report writing and better prepared for the other communication requirements of the follow on 3rd year subject.</p> <p>Students who attend workshops do demonstrate improvement in their resubmitted language task.</p>
Commerce FIN251		Subject integration of language/ learning instruction	<p>Language using role play in workplace context. Focus on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language, • literacies and • culture of conducting workplace interviews. <p>Involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • modelling • scaffolded learning experiences, • formative reviews and • written self-reflection for assessment, 	<p>Student survey noting: increased awareness of relationship between discipline knowledge and necessary workplace communication; the need to develop a professional communication practice strategy.</p>
Education EDGZ921	1, 2, 3	Subject integration of language/ learning instruction, extra-curricular options	<p>Multilayered approach in this core introductory research subject with a large cohort of international students.</p> <p>1. Subject Integration focusing on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysing non-traditional assessment genres • modelling and scaffolding learning activities to assist students to respond to the assessments tasks <p>2. Individual consultations providing formative feedback and in-depth language support.</p>	
Creative Arts	1, 2, 3	Discipline-specific writing circle	Requested follow-on from general thesis writing workshop – regular guided peer review meetings	Focus group interviews and survey.

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Extra-curricular				
Example	Principle	Strategy	Detail	Evaluation ⁴
Individual Consultations	1, 2	Service provided through the Learning Resource Centre, open to all students, at any level of study in any discipline.	Open throughout the academic year, to all students, any level of study, any discipline. International students make up a high percentage of participants. The issues students tend to present include confusion about assessment requirements, format, writing skills, oral presentation skills and 'grammar'. Consultations usually focus on a particular assignment, and aim to help the student develop strategies and confidence to become independent learners and effective communicators within their disciplines. Records allow LD to detect patterns of need and give helpful feedback to faculties.	Regular surveys indicate student satisfaction and increased understanding as a result of intensive, individualised teaching.
Short courses / workshops	1	Academic vocabulary, grammar, specific types of writing, reading strategies	Program runs each semester, open to all students, any level of study, any discipline. International students make up a high percentage of participants. Provides an important forum for the development and testing of resources, which can then be adapted and embedded into curricula.	Surveys – indicating increased understanding of language communications in new academic environment, greater confidence to further develop skills independently.
Seminar series	1	Thesis writing	LD contributes modules and teaching within the Higher Degree Research student program now run by central Student Research Office	Positive student surveys.
Resources for ALL				
Example	Principle	Strategy	Detail	Evaluation ⁵
Unilearning website	1	Addition to various learning environments, providing online support for independent learning	http://unilearning.uow.edu.au/	Regular monitoring of site visits indicates very active usage, and occasional emails indicate site is actively used nationally and internationally. Currently planning interview-based investigation of how, when, why & to what effect UoW students use.

⁴ Evaluation of approaches is notoriously difficult due to the number of factors affecting student learning outcomes. See for example, Arkoudis, S & Starfield, S 2007 'In Course Language Development and Support', discussion paper for National Symposium on English Language Competence of International Students, Barton, ACT, 14/08/2007.

⁵ Evaluation of approaches is notoriously difficult due to the number of factors affecting student learning outcomes. See for example, Arkoudis, S & Starfield, S 2007 'In Course Language Development and Support', discussion paper for National Symposium on English Language Competence of International Students, Barton, ACT, 14/08/2007.

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Online Study Resources	1	Addition to various learning environments, providing online support for independent learning	http://learning.uow.edu.au/resources/	Regular monitoring of site visits. Identification of most common areas visited informs planning for generic workshops.
Template for online learning support modules	1, 2, 3	For curriculum-integration	Postgraduate Online Learning Support (POLS) modules (optional or compulsory participation, up to faculty). In use within Business Studies programs (Wollongong and Dubai), Law (Wollongong and Malaysia) and in Science. [see eg http://ctcp.uow.edu.au/resources/]	Monitoring and surveying of student usage within specific disciplines/courses.
Language HELP website / resources	1, 2, 3	Addition to learning environments, providing support for independent or classroom learning	Language development resources (for Commerce, Informatics, Science, Law, HBS). For an overview, see http://edsnet.cedir.uow.edu.au/ld_cases/view.aspx?ID=23	Ongoing development project.
Advice for all weblog	1, 2, 3	Addition to subject learning environments, providing online support for independent learning	Distilling and disseminating kernels of ALL advice developed within faculty-based subjects.	(in development for delivery July 2008).
L&L podcast	1, 2	For independent study, linked to workshops and weblog	Extending classroom workshops in academic vocabulary and grammar.	(in development for delivery July 2008).

Table 2 Examples of curriculum integrated and extra curricula approaches to assist students to improve academic literacy and language proficiency.

DOCUMENT 3

Recommendations to DEEWR

The development of the Good Practice Principles represents a collective response to major concerns in universities about the development of English language proficiency. The Project Steering Committee recognises that there needs to be continuing substantive discussion, research and professional development and these recommendations suggest some ways to proceed.

The Steering Committee makes the following recommendations to DEEWR on dissemination, follow-up and review:

Recommendation 1

That the Good Practice Principles and the Report on Current Practices be distributed in soft copy to Australian universities, Universities Australia and its committees, other higher education providers, relevant peak bodies and professional associations. These professional associations include: English Australia (EA); National English Language Testing Accreditation Scheme (NEAS); International Education Association of Australia (IEAA); and the Association of Academic Language and Learning (AALL). The Principles should also be distributed to bodies representing pathway providers, government accreditation authorities and individuals who participated in the consultation process for the Project.

Note: The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) would be pleased to assist in the dissemination process.

Recommendation 2

That DEEWR make arrangements for the hosting and maintenance of a resource website for use by universities and other education providers on good practices for development of students' English language proficiency.

Note: The resource website should include the Good Practice Principles, the Report on Current Practices, commissioned papers and the Outcomes Report from the 2007 National Symposium, the English Australia Good Practice Guidelines for Pathway Providers, material from AALL, other research papers, the results of studies by groups of universities, and examples of initiatives and good practices underway within universities and other institutions.

The website should encourage the development of communities of practice in developing students' English language proficiency during university studies, with a particular focus on the needs of students with English as an additional language. It should encourage the sharing of practices across sectors among all groups involved in English language development.

Recommendation 3

That DEEWR ask AUQA, relevant peak bodies and other relevant groups and organisations to take opportunities to present and discuss the Principles at meetings of university representatives and other stakeholders.

DOCUMENT 3

Recommendation 4

That DEEWR encourage and if appropriate support professional associations to: (a) develop training courses and training resources; and (b) to provide professional development workshops for university staff and other stakeholders on good practice in developing students' English language proficiency.

Recommendation 5

That DEEWR ask AUQA to: list the Good Practice Principles in its Audit Manual for self-accrediting institutions (SAIs) as an external reference point; explain to SAIs how the Good Practice Principles will be taken into account in Cycle 2 audits; and ensure that audit panels are aware of the Principles when conducting SAI audits.

Recommendation 6

That DEEWR consider asking an appropriate body to develop a generic statement, for use as relevant by Australian universities, about the expectations placed on entering students to further develop their English language proficiency during their university studies.

Recommendation 7

That DEEWR consider the use of a consultative process similar to that for this Project to review and update the Principles in three years' time.

Recommendation 8

That DEEWR ask the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (ALTC) to consider 'development of students' English language proficiency' as a priority topic for research project funding.

Recommendation 9

That DEEWR note the need for additional research on: (a) the comparability of the various ways in which English language proficiency entry standards are satisfied; and (b) the effectiveness of differing approaches to developing students' English language proficiency during their higher education studies.

Recommendation 10

That, in the light of the support shown by Australian universities for this Project, DEEWR consider the value of a similar project in relation to international students in the vocational education and training sector.