

EAP or genre-based? A comparison of two curricular approaches to the preparation of international students for university

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ABSTRACT

In research on onshore English Language (EL) Centres, there is ongoing debate regarding the academic and linguistic (including written) outcomes of international students for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL). There is little research, however, on the outcomes of EL Centres' pedagogical approaches, despite its potential to improve outcomes. The present study aimed to compare two courses at a university-based EL Centre: an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course and a genre-based (GB) course, 'Reading to Learn' (Rose & Martin, 2012). The article describes a collaborative study between an EL Centre, the university's Learning Centre and a university faculty. The primarily postgraduate students (N = 171) wrote an essay and answered a questionnaire about their perceptions of university preparation. The essays were assessed in terms of the MASUS (Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students) Procedure (Bonanno & Jones, 2007) and the resulting scores and questionnaire responses for the two strands were analysed in terms of descriptive and correlational statistics. The results for writing show that, in the total cohort, the genre-based students significantly outperformed the EAP students overall and in grammatical correctness but differences were not found either on

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some measures of 'at risk' writing or in the cohort recommended for university. The results for the questionnaire show that the genre-based students perceived aspects of their academic and language preparation in a significantly more positive light than the EAP students. A close look at four students' writing and the comments of all students on the questionnaire reveals individual strengths and weaknesses in both groups. In considering the implications of the findings for the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) industry, the article concludes that, to improve written outcomes, EL Centres should introduce a genre-based approach, with fine-tuning to meet the needs of all EAL students.

INTRODUCTION

For international English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, one of the major ways to enter an Australian university is through the network of English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS). This Australian-based (onshore) pathway, which develops students' English language and academic skills, has generally experienced escalating enrolments in recent years. Following an all-time high in 2009 (138,242), ELICOS enrolments fell to 95,028 in 2011, only to rise again in 2012 reaching 142,735 in 2015 (Australian Education International, 2012; AGDET, 2015). Given the importance of this route to university, the literature on ELICOS has focused upon whether or not ELICOS fosters the linguistic and academic outcomes required for university (Dyson, 2014; Floyd, 2015; Oliver, Vanderford & Grote, 2012; Terraschke & Wahid, 2013). There is little research, however, examining how ELICOS curriculum influences outcomes, although such research could identify ways to improve the education of international EAL students.

The present study compares two courses at a university-based ELICOS Centre in terms of student writing and perceptions of linguistic and academic preparation. One strand was an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course and the other was a genre-based (GB) course. In the context of this study, the GB approach was 'Reading to Learn' (Rose & Martin, 2012; Rose, Rose, Farrington & Page, 2008), a set of strategies originally designed for Australian Indigenous students, which teaches reading and writing through particular genres. The article argues that, compared to the EAP approach, the GB approach provides better

written outcomes and higher levels of student satisfaction, but has not been sufficiently adapted to the needs of international EAL university students. The article surveys the study's context and theoretical background and then outlines the methodology and findings. It closes by considering the implications of the results for the ELICOS industry.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This section surveys research on ELICOS (for an overview of the research, see Table 1). Following this, I discuss the two curricular approaches relevant to the present study: EAP and GB pedagogy.

English language pathways

In relation to academic outcomes, some research elucidates the contribution of ELICOS Centres to their graduates' university success and perceptions of success.¹ Floyd (2015) argues that the academic acculturation provided by onshore pathways (e.g. skill in giving oral presentations) led to satisfactory academic outcomes. By comparing two groups entering university, one via an onshore pathway and the other via a test such as the International English Language Testing Service (IELTS), the study found that the early disadvantages of the pathway group were overcome with time. While the pathway group had lower English Language (EL) proficiency upon entry and lower Grade Point Averages (GPAs) in semester one, the groups had similar pass rates in semester one and a diminished difference in GPA in semester two. Studies of student perceptions of academic progress found similar results. By comparing an onshore pathway group with a test group, Terraschke and Wahid (2013) observed that the pathway group felt more pleased with their grades than the test group. Dyson (2014) revealed a possible reason for these results: students attending an EL Centre felt that the pathway had trained them better in academic than language skills.

In contrast, other findings highlight academic differences between ELICOS graduates and their peers. From an analysis of one university's academic results, Oliver et al. (2012) concluded that the students submitting EL proficiency evidence other than standardised tests, e.g. completion of EL pathway courses, displayed more academic difficulties than those submitting standardised test scores. Likewise, Dyson (2014) found that, in their first semester, the EL pathway

graduates received significantly lower grades than peers completing the same academic subjects. It is also worth noting that in Terraschke and Wahid (2013) the group which entered university via a proficiency test attained better academic results than the onshore pathway group.

In relation to linguistic outcomes, some research reveals the influence of EL pathway courses on English proficiency, including writing proficiency. According to Terraschke and Wahid (2013), the students with onshore pathway training felt more prepared for university writing tasks than those who entered via a test. For example, the pathway group was more able to identify specific writing skills, such as required essay structure.

Other research is more skeptical about the contribution of EL pathway courses to improvements in writing. Green's (2005) comparison of pathway learners and candidates taking the IELTS Academic Writing test found improvements at the lower (e.g. 5) but not the higher (e.g. 6) IELTS score bands. Green (2005, p.58) concluded that, "... for writing at least, the formula of 1 band in 200 hours of intensive study cannot be supported". Dyson (2014) illustrates this point by showing that essays written by EL pathway students displayed high levels of 'at risk' writing, with risk measured by the Measuring the Academic Skills of University Students (MASUS) Procedure (Bonanno & Jones, 2007).

By examining EL pathway curriculum, some research uncovers the importance of discipline-embedding for the teaching of writing. Benzie (2011) reveals that the pathway expected to pass on a predictable set of skills whereas the discipline expected students to engage theoretically with existing knowledge. Furthermore, by analysing outcomes from pathway curriculum, Counsell (2011) questions the effectiveness of teaching generic writing strategies, such as revision. The study found that the ex-pathway students did not always transfer strategies into discipline-specific writing at university.

In sum, the small body of work on ELICOS fails to reach agreement regarding outcomes. It suggests, nonetheless, that academic and language skills are both important outcomes but that they may not be sufficient, particularly early in students' university studies. While some research questions the effectiveness of pathway curriculum, there is little work on the outcomes of ELICOS Centres' pedagogical approaches.

TABLE 1
Research on English language pathways

Studies	Participants	Method
Floyd (2015)	Test (<i>N</i> = 134) EAP (<i>N</i> = 108)	Comparison of academic results & questionnaire responses (e.g. age, region) of Testing & EAP students
Terraschke & Wahid (2013)	Test (<i>N</i> = 12) EAP (<i>N</i> = 7) Accounting PG students	Comparison of Test & EAP students by semi-structured quarterly interviews. EAP: 2 prior to entry, 3 post-entry; Direct Test Entry: 3 post-entry
Dyson (2014)	EL Centre mainly PG students (<i>N</i> = 173)	Analysis of writing, perceptions & academic achievement
Oliver, Vanderford & Grote (2012)	UG & PG NESB students, 2/3 international (<i>N</i> = 5, 675); 20.85% of total enrolment	Comparison of ELP requirements & overall academic achievement (WAM) at 1 university
Green (2005)	Test (<i>N</i> = 15,380) Phase 1 EAP (<i>N</i> = 2,476) Phase 2	Phase 1 & 2 studies of gains made on IELTS Academic Writing test. Phase 1: test on 2 occasions Phase 2: learners at entry & exit of EAP courses
Counsell (2011)	Ex-Direct Entry (<i>N</i> = 4) Business	Questionnaire (100 items) & interviews on use of writing strategies
Benzie (2011)	N/A	Comparison of curriculum documents at EL Centre & Business program

EAP and genre-based pedagogy

This section turns to the two curricular approaches pertinent to the present study – EAP and GB pedagogy– and a procedure for assessing genre control in academic writing.

Research on pathways indicates that EAP is the dominant approach in ELICOS (Counsell, 2011; Floyd, 2015; Terraschke & Wahid, 2013). EAP, a branch of English for specific purposes, addresses English language learners’ purposes for using English in the academic domain (Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). Hyland (2013, p. 96) clarifies one of the chief ways in which EAP programs do this: “ESP conceptions of writing focus on assisting students towards competence in particular target genres”. This conception of genre is based on Swales and colleagues’ work in North America (e.g. Swales, 2004), which defines genres as “staged, structured events, designed to perform various communicative purposes by specific discourse communities” (Hyland, 2013, p. 98).

Another approach widely used in adult and tertiary contexts, including with EAL learners (Dreyfus, Humphrey, Mahboob & Martin, 2016), is the genre pedagogy developed by the research group known as the Sydney School. The theoretical base of the Sydney School – the meaning-based theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 2014) – defines genre as “a staged goal-oriented social process” (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 1). Compared to EAP, the Sydney School conceptualises genre more centrally, generally and linguistically, and encapsulates other dimensions such as register (Rose & Martin, 2012; cf. Charles, 2013). Guided by this theorisation of genre, SFL’s applications of genre pedagogy, such as ‘Reading to Learn’, have created strategies for teaching literacy. ‘Reading to Learn’, for example, involves nine sets of strategies for reading and writing in three levels (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 147):

Level 1	Preparing for reading	Joint construction	Individual construction
Level 2	Detailed reading	Joint rewriting	Individual rewriting
Level 3	Sentence making	Spelling	Sentence writing

According to Rose and Martin (2012, p. 147), “The strategies in cycle 2 (‘Reading to Learn’) provide a higher level of support for students to read the language of curriculum texts with detailed comprehension, and to use the language they have learnt from reading in their

writing". Hence, the writing of genres flows from reading them.

An instrument for assessing genre control in tertiary-level academic writing is the MASUS Procedure (Bonanno & Jones, 2007). MASUS is a Post Entry Language Assessment (PELA), which diagnoses strengths and weaknesses in four major areas of university writing, each divided into sub-criteria (see Appendix for the MASUS criteria for expert raters):

- A: Use of source material - is information retrieval and processing of data correct and appropriate for the task?
- B: Structure and development of the argument - is the structure and development of the writing clear and generically appropriate to the topic and its context?
- C: Academic writing style - does the grammar conform to the patterns of written academic English appropriate for the task?
- D: Grammatical correctness - do grammatical errors interfere with communication of the message?

The MASUS Procedure is well-adapted to assessing university writing due to its theoretical and empirical advantages. Unlike skill-based PELAs such as Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA) (Doe, 2014), MASUS focuses on writing within the genres of university disciplines, such as essays. Research on MASUS has demonstrated, moreover, its utility, validity and reliability (Erling & Richardson, 2010; Holder, Jones, Robinson, & Krass, 1999; Scouller, Bonanno, Smith & Krass, 2008).

This survey of the literature elucidates the need to examine the outcomes of EL pathway curriculum, the potential of EAP and GB pedagogy for such an investigation and the suitability of MASUS as a tool for assessing the production of written genres. Although there are explorations of the role of GB approaches in EAP (Bruce, 2013), comparisons of EAP and GB approaches are rare.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study investigates the following questions:

1. Does the EAP or genre-based approach produce academic writing which is more appropriate for university?
2. Do students perceive the EAP or genre-based approach as more effective in developing the academic and linguistic skills required at university?

THE STUDY

Setting

The study was set in an EL Centre contributing between 600 and 700 primarily postgraduate students per annum to an Australian university. It was conducted from 2009 to 2010 by a collaborative team representing the EL Centre, the Learning Centre and a faculty of the university. This study collected two datasets: the overall findings and the findings for the two pedagogical approaches used at the time: an EAP and a GB approach. Dyson (2014) reported on the first dataset and the present article reports on the second (for the relationship between these studies, see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
The relationship between three studies of an EL pathway

2009–2010 study	2014 study (Dyson, 2014)	2016 study
<p>Collected data on 173 EL pathway students' writing, perceptions of preparation & academic progress at university.</p> <p>Analysed the data overall & for the two curricular strands (EAP & GB)</p> <p>Presented findings in an in-house report</p>	<p>Published the overall results, on 173ⁱⁱ EL pathway students' writing, perceptions of preparation & academic progress at university</p>	<p>Reanalysed the original results for writing & perceptions of preparation in the two curricular strands (EAP & GB) & added new data on individual students in the strands</p>

Given the time lapse between the original and the present study, it is important to highlight the ways in which the data are relevant to the current teaching and learning context. The EAP and GB approaches used in 2009 remain current trends in TESOL (Dreyfus et al., 2016; Paltridge & Starfield, 2013). Moreover, students required IELTS 6 to enroll in pre-entry courses in 2009 and still do. Thus, the courses and learners at both points of time are similar.

Curricular approaches

The two types of university preparation courses offered by the Centre are referred to here as EAP and GB. Whilst recognising the role of genre in EAP, I refer to only one as GB because, as mentioned above, this course followed 'Reading to Learn' (Rose & Martin, 2012), in which genre is central. While the EAP course was typical of the Centre's past curriculum, the GB course was offered for the first time in year one of the study. Both courses were 10 weeks in duration – with an optional five additional weeks for the GB course – and aimed to develop proficiency to (at least) IELTS 6.5, the minimum university requirement.

The EAP course:

- Required IELTS band 6 or the satisfactory completion of a prior advanced course which was not IELTS tested;
- Aimed to prepare students for an in-house EL proficiency

test and develop the English proficiency needed for academic purposes;

- Structured the curriculum around weekly themes of academic interest, e.g. Business issues;
- Provided weekly tasks, including the writing of argument and discussion essays;
- Assessed students by an in-house proficiency test comprising the four sections of the IELTS academic test; the result was an IELTS-equivalent score upon which a student's university entry was determined.

The GB course:

- Required IELTS band 6;
- Aimed to prepare students for university entry and develop faculty-like English use;
- Structured the curriculum around 'Reading to Learn' and two core strands: Accounting and Commerce/Arts/Engineering;
- Provided fortnightly task cycles, with half of the weeks devoted to reading and writing in different academic genres;
- Assessed by continuous and progressive weekly tasks, including a written diagnostic; the result was an IELTS-equivalent score upon which a student's Direct Entry was determined.

Participants

The participants were 171 students - 51% of the total pre-entry enrolment - who were completing either of the Centre's pre-entry courses - EAP or GB - and who consented to participate in the study (see Table 2 for the major characteristics of the participants). To briefly sketch the ethics procedure, the study and its materials were approved by the university's human ethics committee. Following this, all students in the pre-entry cohort were given an invitation to participate, a participant information sheet explaining the research, and a consent form, all of which were on paper and in plain English. The participant information sheet explained that normal classes would be organised for students who did not consent and that participants may benefit from the research because they would receive

feedback on their writing and would be directed to suitable support.

On the basis of their IELTS-equivalent scores of 6.5 or above, 119 of this group were 'Recommended' for university entry and 52 students were not and, hence, stayed at the Centre. The entire GB group ($N = 93$) was "Recommended" whereas only a portion of the EAP students gained this status (Total 78; Recommended 26).

TABLE 2
The major characteristics of the participants

Categories	Characteristics	Units
Level of enrolment	Postgraduate	97 %
Gender	Male	60 %
Language background	Chinese	88 %
Intended faculty	Business	84 %
Years learning English	-	10 years (<i>M</i>)
Months at the pathway	-	5.8 months (<i>M</i>)
Last IELTS test (before entering the Centre)	Overall	6.1 (<i>M</i>)
	Listening	6.2 (<i>M</i>)
	Speaking	5.9 (<i>M</i>)
	Reading	6.3 (<i>M</i>)
	Writing	5.7 (<i>M</i>)
Overall IELTS score at end of 10 week course		7.1 (<i>M</i>)

Instruments and procedure

Two instruments were employed to collect data on the students' (a) the MASUS Procedure and (b) a self-report questionnaire.

The MASUS Procedure was adapted to the ELICOS setting to assess the participants' written proficiency. In the MASUS Procedure, students are given a pre-reading and, on the day of the assessment, asked to respond to the issues raised in this pre-reading by answering a question (Bonanno & Jones, 2007). In this study, the students were given a pre-reading on Business Ethics – a required topic at the pathway – and then, on test day, asked to respond to the issues in the article by writing an essay (for the task's instructions, see Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Instructions for the writing task

1. You have been given an article entitled: Ethical business: Challenges and the way forward, by Kamel Mellahi and Geoffrey Wood, to prepare in advance. It is a chapter from Mellahi, K. and Wood, G. (2003) 'The Ethical Business: Challenges and Controversies', pp. 141-147. The article discusses a range of ethical dilemmas facing businesses today.
2. Read the instructions for the writing task:
The article discusses a range of ethical dilemmas facing business today. It is essential that managers recognise that they have ethical obligations not only to their businesses but also to wider society. Discuss this statement.
3. Then when you are ready, write 1 - 2 pages in the booklet given, responding to the task. You may refer to your annotated article as well as your own ideas about the question.
 - You have 1 hour to answer the question.
 - The time is now _____ and you will finish at _____.
 - You will be given time checks ten minutes and two minutes before the end.
 - We will now start the test. You may start writing.

The following rationale supported the validity of adapting MASUS – a PELA – to a pre-entry cohort. Firstly, the majority of the participants were postgraduates, and hence already at the tertiary-level, and all were being trained to attain an Australian university's standard of writing in the coming semester. Secondly, the researchers believed that the feedback and support which forms an integral part of the MASUS Procedure would be useful to the participants. Thirdly, MASUS is empirically underpinned by EAL data (Scouller *et al.*, 2008), making it suitable for the pathway context. In retrospect, one could also observe that MASUS has continued to be trialled on cohorts other than its Australian, undergraduate base, such as at the United Kingdom's Open University (Erling & Richardson, 2010).

The self-report questionnaire was designed to reveal student perceptions of whether the EL Centre had prepared them effectively for university participation. The questions were informed by discussions with pathway graduates and surveys used previously with international students (e.g. Mullins, Quintrell, & Hancock, 1995). The present study

focuses on two questions of the questionnaire (6 and 7). In Question 6, the students were asked to rate 10 statements regarding their preparation on a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree), with 3 signifying "Don't know". These statements were as follows:

- (1) The pathway has prepared me to participate effectively in my university studies;
- (2) At the pathway I have learned the academic skills I need for university;
- (3) At the pathway I have learned the types of writing I need for university;
- (4) At the pathway I have improved in my English language proficiency;
- (5) At the pathway I have improved in my use of grammar;
- (6) At the pathway I have improved in my knowledge of grammar;
- (7) As a result of my pathway course/s, I feel confident about speaking in English at university e.g. giving oral presentations;
- (8) As a result of my pathway course/s, I feel confident about listening to English at university e.g. listening to lectures;
- (9) As a result of my pathway course/s, I feel confident about writing in English at university e.g. writing reports and essays;
- (10) As a result of my pathway course/s, I feel confident about reading in English at university e.g. reading journal articles.

In Question 7, the students were asked to provide reasons for their answers to Question 6.

These instruments were employed with the entire cohort towards the end of their pathway courses. In the adapted form of MASUS, a week prior to the test day the students were given the pre-reading and on test day they were asked to respond to the issues in the pre-reading by writing an essay. On the test day, the students completed the essay and questionnaire, with teachers from the EL Centre as invigilators. The invigilators stayed in the rooms while the essay was written and then, to avoid influencing its outcome, left the room while students completed the questionnaire. The essay took one hour and the questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes.

Data analysis

The data analysis of the essays comprised two main steps: the marking and statistical analysis. Coordinated by the university's Learning Centre, the marking procedure aimed to be as reliable as possible by employing experienced markers, providing them with a briefing and instigating a standardisation process. The briefing instructed the markers in how to use the MASUS criteria for expert raters. Specifically, the markers were asked to assess the essays in terms of the four obligatory MASUS Areas (A, B, C and D), to allocate an 'A' (appropriate) or 'NA' (not appropriate) for each sub-criterion and, from this, an Area rating (out of 4, with 1 signifying 'poor' and 4 signifying 'excellent') and an overall rating (out of 16). For the standardisation process, the marking coordinator prepared a set of descriptors for the four Areas and their sub-criteria (for more details, see Dyson, 2014).

Statistical analyses were conducted on the participants' MASUS scores and responses to the questionnaire. The MASUS scores were divided according to whether the students were in the EAP or GB group and 'Recommended' or 'Not Recommended'. The number of 'at risk' scripts were computed, with 'at risk' defined as 10 or less for an overall mark and 2 or less for an Area. The questionnaire responses of the EAP and GB students to Question 6 (rate ten statements) were analysed but without further division since the anonymous nature of the questionnaires did not permit division into Recommended and Not Recommended cohorts. The data on Question 7 (give your answer for your ratings) were only analysed to locate examples for the following rating bands: 1 or 2 (Strongly disagree or disagree), 3 (Don't know), 4 or 5 (Agree or strongly agree). Descriptive and correlational analyses were conducted on the quantitative data. Note that Cohen's *d* test was only applied to the differences which were statistically significant according to the analysis and the analyses of *t*-test assumptions were done only on the total cohort.

I also conducted an analysis of the essays written by four individual students in the total cohort. While this may seem a small sample, these four texts were representative of the entire cohort because they were selected according to the following criteria:

- The writers of the texts had a similar language background to

- the entire cohort (Mandarin and/or Cantonese);
- The writers of the texts intended to enrol in the main target discipline of the entire cohort (Economics/Business);
 - The writers of two of the texts had attended the EAP course;
 - The writers of the other pair of texts had attended the GB course;
 - One member of each of the course-based pairs was Recommended for university whereas the other was not Recommended;
 - One text from each of the course-based pairs had an overall score of 11 (i.e. just above the 'at risk' criterion of 10 or less and Mean score for the GB groupⁱⁱⁱ);
 - One text from each of the course-based pairs had an overall score of 9 (i.e. just below the 'at risk' criterion of 10 or less and Mean score for the EAP group);
 - The pairs' 'at risk' and 'not at risk' texts resembled the Mean distributions of Areal scores in the total cohort, which was more possible in Areas C and D than A and B.

The analysis of the four texts aimed to illustrate group and individual differences in writing. It was based on the ratings each essay received for the four obligatory MASUS areas and their sub-criteria. Guided where possible by the raters' comments and marks, I looked for examples which supported the ratings.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings for the two research questions. Let us start with the first question: Does the EAP or GB approach produce writing which is more appropriate at the university level? The results present the quantitative analysis and then the four student texts.

To locate any group differences in the total cohort, an independent-samples *t*-test compared the mean MASUS results of the EAP and GB groups. This test met four of the six *t*-test assumptions^{iv}. Importantly, there is homogeneity of variances because Levene's test for equality of variance was found to be met $F(1.3) = 0.014, p = 0.907$ (see Table 3).

TABLE 3
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	SEM	CI (95%) of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	0.014	0.907	3.009	169	0.003	0.795	0.264	0.273	1.317	
Total										
Equal variances not assumed	3.004	162.816	0.003	0.795	0.265	0.272	1.318			

Table 4 summarises the results for the total EAP and GB groups' writing. The *t*-test comparison revealed that the GB students' writing

was significantly better ($M = 10.73$, $SD = 1.708$) than the EAP ($M = 9.94$, $SD = 1.738$) group on the overall score ($t(169) = 3.01$, $p < .003$). The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.45$) was found to fall just under Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$). The GB group ($M = 2.63$, $SD = .604$) was also superior to the EAP group ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .643$) in Area D (Grammatical correctness) ($t(169) = 4.23$, $p < .000$). The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.64$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$).

TABLE 4
Writing of the total EAP and GB students

	Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total	EAP	78	9.94	1.738	.197	-3.009	0.45	.003
	GB	93	10.73	1.708	.177	-3.004		.003
Area A Sources	EAP	78	2.38	.649	.074	-1.576		.117
	GB	93	2.54	.618	.064	-1.569		.119
Area B Structure	EAP	78	2.63	.667	.075	-1.746		.083
	GB	93	2.81	.664	.069	-1.745		.083
Area C Style	EAP	78	2.68	.522	.059	-1.007		.315
	GB	93	2.76	.559	.058	-1.014		.312
Area D Grammar	EAP	78	2.23	.643	.073	-4.226	0.64	.000
	GB	93	2.63	.604	.063	-4.202		.000

To find any group differences in relation to 'at risk' writing in the total cohort, an independent-samples *t*-test compared the numbers of students in the EAP and GB groups with 'at risk' scores. The analysis used the MASUS definition of a score of 10 or less (out of 16). As Table 5 summarises, there were 91 'at risk' students overall, 50 in the EAP and 41 in the GB group. The analysis found a significant difference between the groups only in Area D (Grammatical correctness): the GB was superior ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .602$) to the EAP ($M = 1.94$, $SD = .550$) students in Area D ($t(89) = 2.92$, $p < .004$). The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.60$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$).

TABLE 5
'At risk' total EAP and GB students

	Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SEM	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total	EAP	50	8.92	1.209	.171	-1.219		.226
	GB	41	9.20	.872	.136	-1.258		.212
Area A Sources	EAP	50	2.12	.521	.074	-.663		.509
	GB	41	2.20	.558	.087	-.659		.512
Area B Structure	EAP	50	2.36	.663	.094	.145		.885
	GB	41	2.34	.530	.083	.148		.882
Area C Style	EAP	50	2.50	.580	.082	.959		.340
	GB	41	2.39	.494	.077	.975		.332
Area D Grammar	EAP	50	1.94	.550	.078	-2.917	0.60	.004
	GB	41	2.29	.602	.094	-2.891		.005

To find any group differences in the Recommended cohort, an independent-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the essay scores of the Recommended EAP and GB students (see Table 6). The analysis revealed no significant differences between the groups and, for this reason, Cohen's *d* has not been added to Table 6.

TABLE 6
Writing of Recommended EAP and GB students

	Group	N	M	SD	SEM	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Total	EAP	26	10.23	1.608	.315	-1.337	.184
	GB	93	10.73	1.708	.177	-1.384	.174
Area A Sources	EAP	26	2.38	.496	.097	-1.161	.248
	GB	93	2.54	.618	.064	-1.313	.195
Area B Structure	EAP	26	2.65	.629	.123	-1.048	.297
	GB	93	2.81	.664	.069	-1.081	.286
Area C Style	EAP	26	2.77	.514	.101	.047	.962
	GB	93	2.76	.559	.058	.050	.961
Area D Grammar	EAP	26	2.38	.637	.125	-1.842	.068
	GB	93	2.63	.604	.063	-1.787	.082

To illustrate group and individual differences in writing, an analysis was undertaken of four representative texts. Table 7 presents the MASUS scores attained by the writers of the texts, grouped into curricular approaches (EAP and GB), whether the writer was Recommended for university (R) or Not Recommended (NR) and the Mean score achieved. I shall illustrate (as closely as possible) the total cohort's quantitative results in the four MASUS Areas, by moving from the Area in which there was a significant difference (*D*) to the Areas in which there were no significant differences.

TABLE 7
Overall and Areal MASUS scores for a sample of student texts

	EAP		GB	
	EAP1 (NR)	EAP2 (R)	GB1 (R)	GB2 (R)
Overall	9	11 ^v	9	11
A	2	2	3	2
B	3	3	2	3
C	3	3	2	3
D	1	3	2	3

Key: 10 or less (out of 16) was an 'at risk' overall score; 2 or less (out of 4) was an 'at risk' Area score.

In relation to Area D (grammatical correctness), the sample illustrates the superior writing of the GB group. GB1 and EAP1's scores (GB1:2; EAP1:1) exemplify the difference, although both students' texts were 'at risk' in this Area. GB1 appeared to have earned this score by using more advanced grammatical structures, such as:

- (1) Appropriate clause structure (relative pronoun added),
e.g. profits which is the core of industry (para. 2);
- (2) Subject-verb agreement (on lexical verbs),
e.g. Industry supports ..., (para. 2).

In contrast, EAP1's score is based on errors which interfered with meaning, such as:

- (3) Inappropriate clause structure (relative pronoun missing),
e.g. These two areas are the most vulnerable part can be affected directly (para. 1);
- (4) Lack of subject-verb agreement (on lexical verbs),
e.g. This essay mainly argue that ... (para. 1).

Nonetheless, GB1 made errors of clause structure and subject-verb agreement in particular linguistic contexts:

- (5) Inappropriate clause structure (information questions),
e.g. how profits can be made if the ecological environment

does not exist? (para. 2);

- (6) Lack of subject-verb agreement (between the subject of the main clause and the verb 'to be' in a relative clause) in example (1).

Hence, despite GB1's more competent grammatical usage, his/her 'at risk' score appears justified.

As regards Area A (the use of source material), the sample clearly illustrates the better written outcomes of the GB group. This pattern is best exemplified by comparing the writing of GB1 with the three other students. Although these other students paraphrased quite well, GB1 engaged to a greater extent with the reading, the article entitled: Ethical business: Challenges and the way forward. GB1's essay was, in fact, the only essay which supplied relevant information, avoided irrelevancies, integrated quotations into the text and provided in-text references. However, GB1 (like the three other students) did not write either page numbers for the quotations or a reference list. Hence, although GB1's essay exhibited a more academic use of sources than the others, none of the texts conformed to university standards of academic honesty.

In contrast to Areas D and A, the sample's results for Area B (essay structure and argument) uncover greater weaknesses in the GB pair's writing. GB1's text, which achieved a score of 2, serves again as the best example. The other texts had an explicit thesis statement, some development of that statement in the following paragraphs and a statement of conclusion. In contrast, GB1's essay lacked a thesis statement and, despite its attempt to develop an argument through paragraph structure (e.g. First, Secondly,), was not clearly argued.

In relation to Area C (academic style), the sample's results similarly highlight some strengths in the EAP pair's writing. We see that the EAP students had features of a better academic style, such as appropriate lexis (word choice), e.g. furthermore (EAP1, para. 3). While some features of good style were also apparent in GB2's text, in GB1's there were 'at risk' elements, such as inappropriate lexis, e.g. self-evident (para. 1).

To summarise, this close-up on the total cohort's writing exemplifies the general trend for the GB students to produce better scripts than their EAP peers. This trend is particularly evident in Areas D (grammatical correctness) but is also apparent in A (the use of source material).

Nevertheless, the scripts reveal that the GB students experienced challenges in these Areas as well as in Areas B (essay structure and argument) and C (academic style). Individual EAP students, moreover, achieved some success in Areas B and C. However, although GB1 attained 'at risk' scores in more Areas than EAP1 (GB1:3; EAL1:2), the former student was Recommended to enter university whereas the latter was not.

We turn now to the second research question of whether the students perceived the EAP or GB approach as more effective in developing the academic and linguistic skills required at university. To ascertain whether the GB or EAP students felt that their respective courses prepared them better for university studies, an independent-samples t-test was conducted on the students' responses to the 10 statements listed in Question 6 of the questionnaire. For statements 1, 2, 5, 8, 9, and 10, there was a significant difference in the ratings of the GB and EAP students. As Table 8 summarises, these results indicate that, compared to their EAP peers, the GB students felt that their course gave them more help to:

- participate effectively in my university studies (Question 1) - GB ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .697$) and EAP ($M = 3.61$, $SD = .899$), $t(163) = 3.83$, $p = 0.00$ - The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.59$) was found to exceed Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$);
- learn the academic skills needed for university (Question 2) - GB ($M = 4.17$, $SD = .691$) and EAP ($M = 3.78$, $SD = .997$), $t(162) = 2.90$, $p = 0.004$ - The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.41$) was found to fall under Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$);
- improve in the use of grammar (Question 5) - GB ($M = 3.66$, $SD = .738$) and EAP ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.044$), $t(162) = 2.36$, $p = 0.019$ - The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.36$) was found to fall under Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$);
- feel confident about listening to English at university (Question 8) - GB ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .882$) and EAP ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.018$), $t(160) = 3.25$, $p = 0.001$; The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.51$) was found to conform to Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$);

- feel confident about writing in English at university (Question 9) - GB ($M = 3.72$, $SD = .885$) and EAP ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .941$), $t(160) = 2.44$, $p = 0.016$; The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.38$) was found to fall under Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$);
- feel confident about reading in English at university (Question 10) - GB ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .868$) and EAP ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.934$), $t(160) = 3.05$, $p = 0.003$ - The effect size for this analysis ($d = 0.48$) was found to almost conform to Cohen's (1988) convention for a medium effect ($d = 0.50$).

However, there were no significant differences between the GB and EAP students in their responses to the remainder of the statements: 3, 4, 6, and 7. Thus, these results indicate that, compared to their EAP peers, the GB students did not feel that their course gave them more help to:

- learn the types of writing I need for university (Question 3);
- improve in English language proficiency (Question 4);
- improve in knowledge of grammar (Question 6);
- feel confident about speaking in English at university (Question 7).

TABLE 8
EAP and GB students' ratings of preparation at an EL Centre

Questions	Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SEM</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	EAP	90	4.09	.697	.074	3.825	0.59	.000
	GB	75	3.61	.899	.104	3.739		.000
2	EAP	90	4.17	.691	.073	2.895	0.45	.004
	GB	74	3.78	.997	.116	2.797		.006
3	EAP	87	4.08	.810	.087	1.694		.092
	GB	71	3.85	.936	.111	1.670		.097
4	EAP	89	3.92	.815	.086	1.913		.058
	GB	75	3.65	.979	.113	1.883		.062
5	EAP	89	3.66	.738	.078	2.360	0.36	.019
	GB	75	3.33	1.044	.121	2.294		.023
6	EAP	90	3.47	.902	.095	.786		.433
	GB	75	3.35	1.059	.122	.775		.440
7	EAP	86	3.80	.992	.107	1.863		.064
	GB	75	3.51	1.018	.118	1.860		.065
8	EAP	87	3.97	.882	.095	3.252	0.51	.001
	GB	75	3.48	1.018	.118	3.218		.002
9	EAP	87	3.72	.885	.095	2.443	0.38	.016
	GB	75	3.37	.941	.109	2.431		.016
10	EAP	87	3.89	.868	.093	3.046	0.48	.003
	GB	75	3.45	.934	.108	3.030		.003

Were there any differences in the reasons given by the GB and EAP students for their course ratings? It is not possible to give a clear answer to this question because the analysis of Question 7 of the questionnaire only located examples for the score bands: 1 or 2

(Strongly disagree or disagree), 3 (Don't know), 4 or 5 (Agree or strongly agree). Despite this limitation, the students' examples highlight positive outcomes, uncertainty and critical observation about the courses.

Let's consider two of the ten statements that are relevant to the results for writing and on which the groups differed significantly. In response to "As a result of my pathway course/s, I feel confident about writing in English at university" (statement 9), the GB students wrote:

- Yes, we practiced a lot of writing. My structure and vocabularies have been improved (5 or 4);
- Some types of essays I can feel confidence, but some may not (3);
- I still have some problems with my writing such as time management and grammar (1 or 2).
- In contrast, the EAP students wrote:
- Yes, I really have more knowledge about how to write a report or essay in the future (5 or 4);
- I am not sure. Maybe the essays and reports in university will be much longer than what we have written (3);
- The(y) don't teach us the correct way to write the(y) just said it wrong (1 or 2).

In response to "At the pathway I have improved in my use of grammar" (statement 5), the genre-based students wrote:

- The teachers also correct our grammar (5 or 4);
- Maybe a little (3);
- Not too much because there are few courses about the grammar (1 or 2).

The EAP students wrote:

- I've learned how to use grammars in a correct way (5 or 4);
- I don't know because my grammar knowledge is poor (3);
- Not much explanation for grammar (1 or 2).

While these examples do not reveal group differences, they underscore how students in both groups experienced responses ranging from positive to critical.

To summarise, the findings showed the superiority of the GB approach in terms of writing and perceptions, but writing difficulties and some critical perceptions in both groups. The MASUS results reveal that, for the total cohort, the GB course produced significantly superior writing overall and in terms of grammar. The analysis of four texts illustrated the GB students' higher level of grammatical correctness and a tendency towards their better use of sources. The questionnaire ratings showed that, in six of the 10 statements, the GB students felt better prepared by their courses than their EAP peers. This result included the statements concerning confidence in writing and the use of grammar. Nonetheless, the GB course was on par with the EAP group in terms of the total cohort's score for 'at risk' writing (except for grammar) and the Recommended cohort's results for writing. The sample of writing exemplified both groups' weaknesses in all MASUS Areas. Finally, the students' reasons for their course ratings highlighted the need for change in both courses.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated two research questions about a postgraduate cohort at an EL Centre. The first asked whether the EAP or GB approach produced writing which was more appropriate at the university level. The second asked whether students perceive the EAP or GB approach as more effective in developing the academic and linguistic skills required at university. This section discusses the implications of the findings.

For the first question, the finding for the total cohort that the GB students produced significantly more competent writing overall and in Area D (grammar) implies that GB approaches better equip EAL students with the required skills for university writing. Specifically, these results support the methodology of 'Reading to Learn', whose strategies teach "... from the level of social context, through patterns (of) meaning in whole texts, to patterns of wording in sentences, and patterns of spelling in words" (Rose & Martin, 2012, p. 234). The finding for grammar is comprehensible because Level 3 strategies focus on sentence writing and, inevitably, structural elements, including subject-verb agreement, e.g. A business needs to be ethical in today's world. While there were no significant differences between the groups in the Recommended cohort, this was probably due to the fact that only the

most proficient EAP students remained when 67% of the EAP group was not Recommended. The results, hence, enrich on-going research on the place of GB approaches in EAP/ESP (Flowerdew, 2005; Cheng, 2006).

The total MASUS findings make the interesting suggestion that the GB approach may prompt the use of correct structural grammar (Area D) more than typically genre elements, like argument (Area B). For the total cohort, the largest effect sizes were apparent in Area D, specifically in the differences between the groups' scores and 'at risk' numbers. Of course, the genre-based group's grammatical gains may be attributable to 'Reading to Learn' rather than GB approaches generally and so research should examine whether other GB approaches, such as 'Learning to Write' (Rose & Martin, 2012), occasion the same result. Furthermore, the grammatical gains may be limited to EAL cohorts which, as other MASUS research shows, perform less well in Area D than English L1 speakers (Scouller et al., 2008). These gains may also have arisen from different initial levels of proficiency since, upon enrolment in their courses, only the GB students' scores were entirely IELTS tested. The influence of initial proficiency should be more tightly controlled in future research. Even so, the study augments the insight in MASUS and other SFL research (Dreyfus et al., 2016) that (non-functional) grammar, such as clause structure, is a dimension of genre-based pedagogy, particularly for EAL students. The results for the second question imply that, in pathways, GB courses develop more confidence regarding university-level skills than EAP courses. Two out of the six statements on which the GB group was significantly superior corroborate the MASUS results: the GB students felt more confident about writing at university and positive about improvements in their use of grammar. One possible reason for this result is that the teaching of university genres, including essays, was more coherent in the GB course because, unlike the EAP course, the GB course had greater discipline-embedding in its two core strands: Accounting and Commerce-Arts-Engineering. Thus, while supporting literature showing how pathways improve students' academic and linguistic confidence (Dyson, 2014; Terraschke & Wahid, 2013), the study extends current understandings by highlighting the particular contribution of a GB course to the development of students' confidence.

Some results for both research questions suggest, however, that the GB approach was not sufficiently adapted to the needs of EAL international students. Although writing was the participants' weakest IELTS score (see Table 2), in the total cohort the GB and EAP groups did not differ significantly in their scores for three Areas – sources, structure and style – and in the numbers of students with 'at risk' writing in these Areas and overall. Moreover, in the significant MASUS scores only a medium effect size was evident in the groups' overall results and in the significant questionnaire ratings the lowest effect sizes were evident in the statements concerning confidence in writing and the use of grammar. The analysis of the individual scripts, which were representative of the total cohort including the groups' Mean scores, and the questionnaire responses add a perspective not captured by the statistics: they show both groups' strengths and weaknesses as well as ideas about either insufficiencies or changes. These results are reminiscent of on-going debate as to whether international EAL university students have sufficient preparation in terms of EL proficiency, including written proficiency, and academic honesty (Birrell, 2006; Bretag, 2007; Baird, 2010; The Drum, 2015). The adaptation of GB pedagogy to an EAL audience merits further research.

The overall findings suggest that GB approaches should be expanded in EL pathways, with further adaptation to meet the needs of EAL students. The superior results of the GB approach imply that ESP and EAP's conceptualisation of genre could be broadened by the linguistically richer definition of the Sydney School. Paralleling GB approaches in university-level support (Mort & Drury, 2012), such initiatives could experiment with various pedagogies, including 'Reading to Learn'. The application of MASUS to a pre-entry cohort suggests that ELICOS could use MASUS to diagnose genre writing. Fine-tuning, however, seems necessary. Since the genre-based approach was unable to sufficiently resolve problems in sources, structure, style and grammar. EL Centres need more coherent programs in these areas. For example, pathways should assess and teach English grammar regularly not only as a resource for making meaning but also as a formal system whose features, such as word order, are processed in developmental stages by EAL learners (Dyson, 2010).

Echoing Green's (2005) observation about the need for sufficient time for proficiency building, some students, such as GB1 who was at risk in three Areas, may require more time in the pre-entry context.

Administrative implications would accompany the introduction of a fine-tuned genre-based pedagogy. Teachers would require training in how to teach the selected GB approach and integrate additional perspectives, such as on the use of sources/referencing. Staff workloads would need to be adjusted so that teachers could enrich their knowledge of university genres and develop new curriculum, perhaps through collaborative projects with academic staff. If the genres were specified more precisely in disciplinary terms, class organisation should be based to a greater extent on students' disciplines. Finally, since one intensive course may not equip students for Direct Entry, it should be recognised that a greater proportion of students may need more than one.

The present study has strengths and weaknesses. It has a substantial cohort and, due to its comparison of two actual courses, validity, specifically the quality of test usefulness termed authenticity (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). On the other hand, the groups differed in size in the total and Recommended cohorts and the results on perceptions may have been influenced by the novelty of the GB course. Further research comparing ELICOS curricular approaches is needed and this research should address these limitations.

CONCLUSION

In responding to the debate about the linguistic and academic outcomes of EL pathways, this comparison of an EAP and GB course concludes that the GB course produced better writers and more linguistically and academically confident graduates than its EAP counterpart, but needed more adaptation to EAL learners' particular requirements. This result implies that the curriculum of ELICOS Centres could be improved by experimenting with 'Reading to Learn' and potentially other GB pedagogies as well as fine-tuning them for EAL students.

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APPENDIX: MASUS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

MASUS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA RATING SHEET (EXPERT LITERACY RATERS)

Cohort _____ Name _____ S.I.D. _____

KEY TO RATING:

- 4 = excellent / no problems / accurate / very appropriate A = appropriate
 3 = good / minor problems / mainly accurate / largely appropriate NA = not appropriate
 2 = only fair / some problems / often inaccurate / often inappropriate
 1 = poor / major problems / inaccurate / inappropriate

CRITERIA		
A. <i>Use of source material</i> - is information retrieval and processing of visual, verbal and numerical data correct and appropriate for the tasks?	4	3 2 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most relevant data is employed • use of irrelevant data is avoided • visual and numerical data is interpreted correctly • visual and numerical data is transferred correctly • data is integrated with text • text is free from plagiarism 	A	NA
B. <i>Structure and development of answer</i> - is the structure and development of the answer clear and generally appropriate to the question and its context?	4	3 2 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ genre is appropriate to the task ▪ clear focussed thesis statement ▪ choice of Theme and New reflects structure ▪ critical evaluation of evidence ▪ use of evidence consistent with thesis ▪ statement of conclusion which follows from argument / evaluation and relates to the thesis 	A	NA
C. <i>Academic writing style</i> - does the grammar conform to the patterns of written academic English appropriate for the tasks?	4	3 2 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ appropriate use of grammatical metaphor and nominal group structure ▪ appropriate use of interpersonal metaphor ▪ demonstrated control of appropriate modality ▪ demonstrated control of cohesive devices - reference chains, textual reference ▪ demonstrated control of taxonomic relations ▪ appropriate choice of lexis 	A	NA
D. <i>Grammatical correctness</i> - do grammatical errors interfere with communicating the message?	4	3 2 1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ clause structure follows recognisable and appropriate patterns of English ▪ correct subject/verb agreement ▪ consistent and appropriate tense choice, correctly formed ▪ correct singular / plural noun agreement 	A	NA
E. <i>Qualities of presentation</i>	not rated	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ spelling generally correct ▪ handwriting legible ▪ paragraphing reflects essay structure 	A	NA

ⁱ The research on international students entering Australian universities uses a variety of terms to describe students' entry routes, including English language Centres, English language pathways, Direct Entry courses and EAP courses. English language pathways are study options offered either offshore e.g. by in-country Testing or onshore by EL Centres in Australia under the ELICOS umbrella. Direct Entry (otherwise known as EAP) is an intensive route which does not measure exit outcomes with standardised tests. EAP courses may or may not use standardised tests.

ⁱⁱ In the original study and Author (2014), the total cohort was 173; however, the total number in this study is 171 since two MASUS scores were not available.

ⁱⁱⁱ A mark of 10 would have reflected the EAP average better than 11; however, the majority of EAP students who received an overall mark of 10 were not Recommended for university.

^{iv} Here, I briefly report on the five other t-test assumptions. When we consider the Total student score as the dependent variable, the dependent variable is measured on a continuous scale. When the EAP and GB groups are considered the groups, the independent variable consists of two independent groups. Since the students only belonged to one group, the observations are independent. In contrast, the assumption regarding significant outliers is not met because the total MASUS scores for both groups contain some extreme cases. The final assumption is also not quite met because using the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality, the dependent variable is not approximately normally distributed for each group of the independent variable: GB $p < .013$, EAP $p < .030$. However, according to the histograms, Skewness and Kurtosis, the distribution is visually normal (see the histogram below).

