



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM  
INTERNATIONAL  
ACADEMY

# ESAP for Foundation Science & Engineering



Jane Sjoberg

[j.e.sjoberg@bham.ac.uk](mailto:j.e.sjoberg@bham.ac.uk)

EAP Tutor (Birmingham International Academy)



BIRMINGHAM  
INTERNATIONAL  
ACADEMY

# Workshop Outline

- ❑ The context
- ❑ The ESAP problem
- ❑ A solution?
- ❑ Challenges
- ❑ What *we* did and what *you* might do



# The Birmingham Context

- ❑ BIA International Foundation Pathways programme (est. 2012)
- ❑ Over 250 international students (China, Gulf States, etc)
- ❑ Ages 16+
- ❑ Levels B1+ to C2+
- ❑ 2 main discipline-based pathways:
  - ABSSL (Arts & Law/Business/Social Sciences)
  - EPS/MLGS (Engineering & Physical Sciences, Medical & Life Sciences)



# The problem?

- Increasing numbers of very high level language competence (C2+) students
  - Bilingual/English medium/UK-schooled (!)
  - IELTS 8.0+ (external and internal testing)
  - Disengaged with EGAP-based materials
  - Demotivated and prone to absence
  - Not stretched in terms of learning
  - Not being fairly assessed



# A solution?

- A new 40-credit module for C2+ EPS/MLGS students: *Advanced Academic Skills for Foundation Science & Engineering*



# Advanced Academic Skills for Foundation Science & Engineering

Our remit was to design a 40-credit foundation-level module over 2 semesters in order to

- ❑ Motivate young STEM (*Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths*) C2+ learners who do not see the relevance of generic EAP with more challenging course input
- ❑ Support these learners in acquiring the study skills and academic language required in their future undergraduate degrees



# Discuss briefly with a partner

- What challenges do you think we faced in designing this module?



# Challenges:

- ❑ How subject specific *should* or *could* we be?
- ❑ What should we teach? (topics/materials?)
- ❑ Who should teach it – EAP specialists or subject specialists?
- ❑ How should the course be organised (e.g. how long/how many hours/which semester)?
- ❑ How should the module be assessed?
- ❑ Time/practical constraints



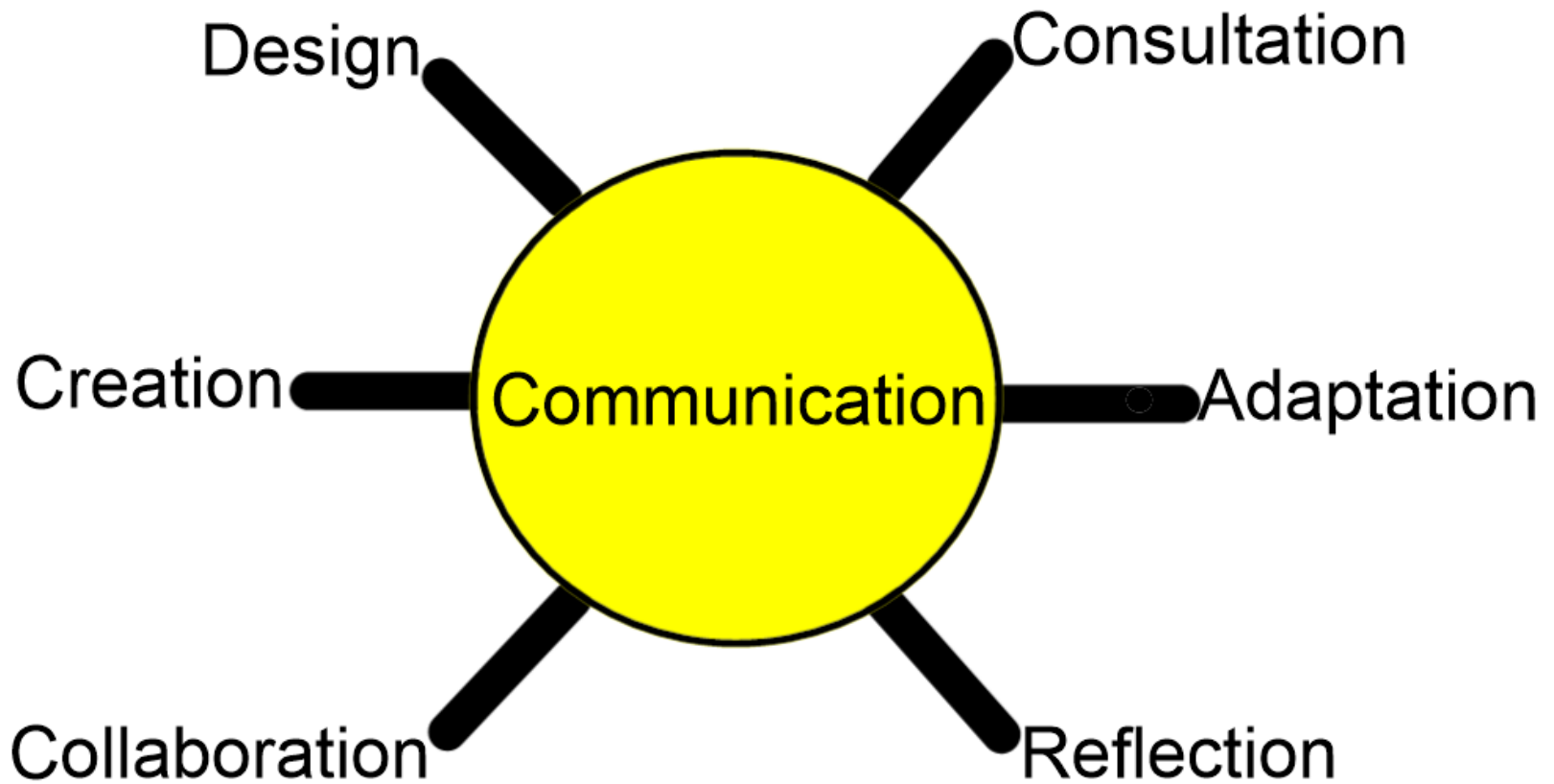


# Challenges:

- ❑ How subject specific *should* or *could* we be?
- ❑ What should we teach? (topics/materials?)
- ❑ Who should teach it – EAP specialists or subject specialists?
- ❑ How should the course be organised (e.g. how long/how many hours/which semester)?
- ❑ How should the module be assessed?
- ❑ **Time/practical constraints**



# What Did *We* Do?



# Your choice

- Think about the challenges and how you would address them in your context then hear and see what we did
- See what we did and discuss what you would do differently



# Consulting

- ❑ Meetings of Subject Pathway & EAP Leads to discuss module design and assessment. EAP tutor/materials writer also consulted
- ❑ Module specifications, assessment and assessment criteria established and approved



# Adapting

- ❑ Term 1 EAP input remained unchanged – 2h tuition per week of *Advanced Study Skills* in

- genre/academic style
- referencing
- planning & drafting
- source material evaluation
- critical thinking/analysis

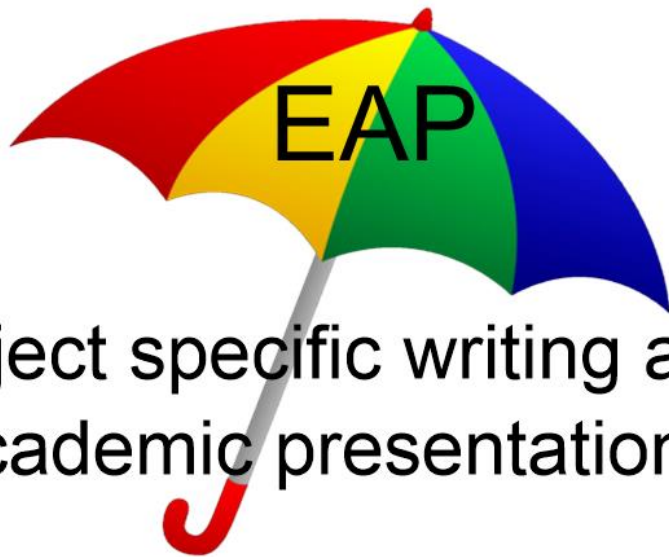
**Subject leads all agreed on the importance of these as core academic skills**

- ❑ Term 1 EAP assessment the same (essay + presentation) but with higher module weighting (30% cf 15%) and longer word count (1,500 cf 750)



# Designing

- ❑ A new hybrid Term 2 course structure
- ❑ EAP-led sessions & formative mid-term progress test followed by subject specific labs/research project within pathway modules



subject specific writing and academic presentations

**EAP supporting and informing the subject specific stages of learning**



# Term 2 Outline

weeks 1-5	week 5	week 6	week 7	week 8	week 9	week 10	week 11
EAP input sessions & tutorials	Formative Progress Test Meet with EPS & MLGS Module Leads to discuss specialist academic support schedule for rest of semester 2	Discuss report structure/topic/use of resources with academic supervisor - they will e-mail to discuss time & place to meet each week.	Meet academic supervisor to discuss progress with report/ask Qs etc	Meet academic supervisor to discuss progress with report/ask Qs etc. Thinking critically about data in particular.	Progress check with academic supervisor-report and presentation.	Review of report and presentation with academic supervisor.	Assessed presentations - Deadline for report submission.
Tutorials with EAP Tutor & Feedback on outline/draft (max 1,000 words)							

**Handover**

Academic Pathway	Supervisor	e-mail contact
Chemical Engineering		
Computer Science		
Civil Engineering		
Mechanical Engineering		
Electrical Engineering		



# Creating

- Term 2 EAP materials & formative progress test with a focus on
  - Tables, figures and data commentary
  - Lab reports & error analysis
  - Qualifying claims (boosters & modifiers)
  - Abstracts
  - Scientific presentation skills





# Examples of Materials

## TASK 1.2 PROBLEMS WITH DATA PRESENTATION

Take a look at the figures and tables below. What problems can you identify?

Make sure you avoid similar problems in your own tables and figures!

### Example 1

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Easy to use	✓	✓	
Cleanability			✓
Users can store it under a table.			✓
portability	✓		✓
Water resistant		✓	

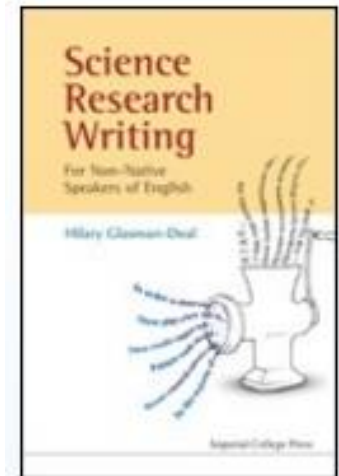
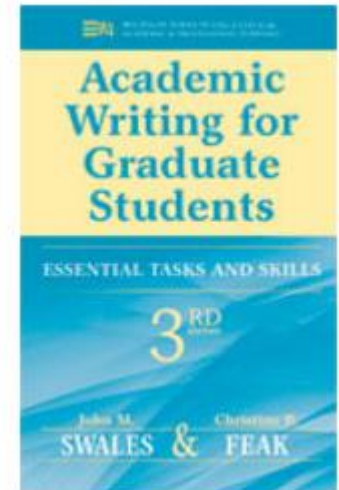
*Key Design Features of Each Model*



# Useful Sources

- ❑ Swales & Feak (2012)
- ❑ Glasman-Deal (2009)
- ❑ Exemplars from Module Leads (e.g. labs)

**Used to inspire tasks but not  
used 'as is' ...  
language/concepts  
not suitable or relevant at  
foundation level**



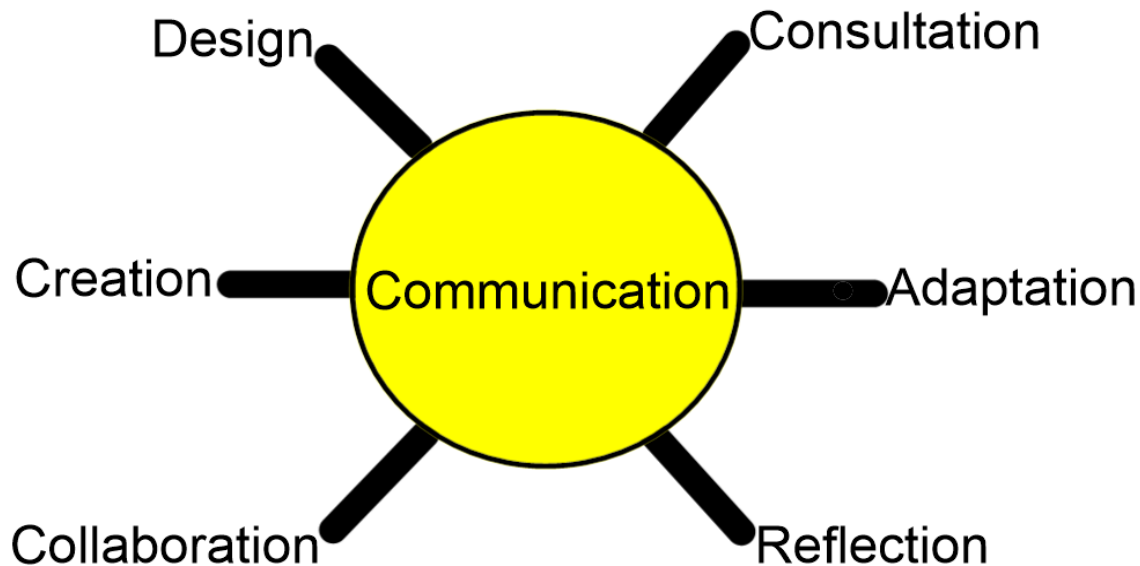
# Collaborating

- ❑ Preparatory collaboration
  - Getting exemplars of lab reports/ emailing queries/ getting feedback on materials
  - Developing assessment criteria (subject pathway module & EAP combined)
- ❑ Regular tutorials with EAP tutor (contact with subject supervisor when and if necessary)
- ❑ EAP feedback on essay outline and 1,000 words of text
- ❑ EAP feedback comments cc-ed to supervisors



# Choose an area to focus on

- ❑ What challenges would you face designing an ESAP course in your own context? How might you go about responding to these challenges?



# Feedback from Staff

- 'The module gave the students a chance to apply what they learned in a discipline specific subject, whilst ensuring that all students regardless of their preferred studies had a minimum level of transferable academic skills'.
- 'Two staff members supporting the students was effective in identifying areas where the students needed more guidance. It may be that the EAP staff have a more effective working relationship with students as they have had longer time to develop a personal interaction'.
- 'Interesting to indirectly see your practice through another colleague's eyes'.



# Feedback from Students

- 'I improved my time management. I needed to speak with my tutor when I needed AND when the tutor was available so I had to manage my time to receive feedback and learn'.
- 'Maybe spend more time on practicing and teaching presentations, but the report and research skills taught were more than excellent and helped greatly even in my first year of my program'.



# Student expectations about this module



# We appear to be meeting expectations





# Future Challenges...?

- ❑ Marking and moderation processes need work as supervisors vary in approach and are often unused to standardising
- ❑ Students appear to want more on labs and presentation skills
- ❑ The ability to offer labs is restricted to availability and timetabling – we need to manage expectations
- ❑ **Time/practical constraints** are not to be underestimated!

