Discipline-specific English Programs

The Griffith English Language Enhancement Course: credit-bearing; embedded; discipline-specific

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Overview of the session

- Overview of the Griffith English Language Enhancement Strategy
- Context, rationale & related research
- The English Language Enhancement Course
  - development
  - implementation
  - challenges & successes
  - research
Griffith English Language Enhancement Strategy

- Audit of all English language support mechanisms across the whole university undertaken prior to AUQA audit in 2008

- Established an English Language Working Party (2008) to develop English language support initiatives for international students

  - Membership: DVC (Academic), PVC (international), Secretariat, International Office, academics, School of Languages & Linguistics, Griffith English Language Institute

- Developed and implemented the **Griffith English Language Enhancement Strategy**
# Griffith English Language Enhancement Strategy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before your degree</th>
<th>During your degree</th>
<th>Finishing your degree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Griffith UniPrep</strong></td>
<td><strong>English HELP</strong></td>
<td><strong>IELTS4grads</strong></td>
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<td>An intensive 3-week program delivered prior to each semester for students with unconditional offer. Provides the language skills essential for successful tertiary studies in English.</td>
<td>Free discipline-specific English language support for all degree program students. Group workshops &amp; individual consultations with GELI tutors.</td>
<td>Subsidised IELTS ‘exit test’ at end of degree. Students completing a full degree at Griffith can sit an IELTS test at 50% of normal test fee.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>English Language Enhancement Course (ELEC)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Linx</strong></td>
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<td>Credit-bearing embedded, discipline-specific.</td>
<td>Social immersion experiences. Promotes social and intellectual interaction, encouraging the establishment and building of useful ties across languages, cultures and countries.</td>
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Context and rationale

- Birrell report (2006)
- AEI National Symposium (2007)
- DEEWR Good Practice Principles (2008)
1. Universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies.

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.
Recent research in discipline-specific support

- *The impact of English language proficiency and workplace readiness on the employment outcomes of tertiary international students* (Arkoudis, Hawthorne, Baik, O’Loughlin, Leach, Bexley, 2009)

- *Improving academic outcomes of undergraduate ESL students: the case for discipline-specific academic skills programs* (Baik & Greig, 2009)
English Language Enhancement Course (ELEC)

- Mandatory for all UG international students with IELTS<7
- Optional domestic CALD* students
- Delivered in student’s first semester of UG
- Offered on all campuses in each semester
- Common delivery standards, learning outcomes, content & assessment
- Co-delivered by LAL & GELI (2 hours lectures; 2 hours tutorials)

*culturally and linguistically diverse
Griffith makes English refresher mandatory

Andrew Trounson | The Australian | February 17, 2010 12:00AM

GRIFFITH University has introduced a mandatory English language enhancement course for international students with merely competent English.

Starting this semester, the program is being watched by other universities as the government moves to raise English standards for skilled migrants.

Griffith is also offering to subsidise students to take an International English Language Testing System exam at the end of their course.

Deputy vice-chancellor (academic) Sue Spence said the program was aimed at optimising the English skills of students.

Professor Spence said she believed Griffith was the first university to introduce a mandatory English course across all programs, and she expected other universities would follow as the sector looked to ensure strong standards. "It is important to ensure that any commercial pressures don't take precedence over academic standards," she said.

Under the new system all international students from non-English speaking backgrounds who have an IELTS score of less than 7, which rates them as good speakers, must take the 10 credit point English enhancement course. Some students with an IELTS of at least 6.5 can be subject to exemptions.
ELEC: credit-bearing, embedded, discipline-specific

- **Credit-bearing:**
  - 10 credit points
  - not an additional requirement
  - no extra time to complete

- **Embedded:**
  - first semester of all UG degrees
  - complicated program rule changes

- **Discipline-specific:**
  - sub-committee devised the recommended criteria and intended learning outcomes
  - working parties within each broad discipline were consulted
  - four course outlines devised and approved
Development: Intended Learning Outcomes

1. To develop the communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic) in English of students in an academic and specific disciplinary context, including producing, interpreting, analysing and participating in text. Text refers to authentic spoken or written discourse in a particular genre.

2. To raise student awareness of features and expectations of the Australian tertiary system that underpin English language practices in Australian universities as it fits within the broader Australian cultural context.

3. To ensure students are aware of their responsibility to continue to develop their English language skills throughout the course of their degree program.
Implementation

- Establishing of partnership between the Griffith English Language Institute (GELI) and the School of Languages and Linguistics (LAL)
- Project managers from each appointed:
  - Consult with working parties from each of the 4 Groups and create course outlines for Business; Health; SEET; Arts & Social Sciences
  - Discipline-specific nature of content (Development teams)
  - Embedding of ExcelL intercultural communication skills role-plays
  - Recruiting and training of tutors
  - Text book
Challenges & successes

Challenges:
- Lecture vs tutorial hours and minimum numbers for each (1200 sts)
- Working across elements (LAL/GELI)
- Communication channels between the newly appointed LAL coordinator, the other two newly appointed lecturers, the GELI coordinator & 25 tutors
- Multicampus challenges
- Communication between the convenors of the 4 courses and the tutorial development team
- Time to develop material
- Discipline-specific yet common outcomes so as to be comparable across all four streams
- Variables in cohort: differing proficiency levels; differing academic skills backgrounds
Challenges & successes

Successes:
- All enrolment systems, student identification systems and exemption application systems worked very well
- Material development teams (Convenor, RA, GELI tutor)
- LAL/GELI relationship producing further useful cooperative ventures
- Significant interest from other Australian institutions
- An encouraging degree of buy-in from academic units across the university
- Significant growth in international students accessing other GELES strategies and support services
- Euphoria associated with the successful launch of a new and innovative Higher Education program
|   | universities are responsible for ensuring that their students are sufficiently competent in the English language to participate effectively in their university studies. | ✓ Minimum English language entry requirements are set.  
✓ UniPrep  
✓ EnglishHELP  
✓ ELEC |
|   | Resourcing for English language development is adequate to meet students’ needs throughout their studies. | ✓ EnglishHELP funded through the PVC(I)  
✓ ELEC is funded through FPOS  
✓ Griffith has committed financially over 6 years for the other strategies |
|   | students have responsibilities for further developing their English language proficiency during their study at university and are advised of these responsibilities prior to enrolment. | ✓ Embedded in ELEC  
✓ Encouraged via EnglishHELP tutors  
✓ Emphasised at orientation  
✓ Promoted on information sites on the web |
|   | universities ensure that the English language entry pathways they approve for the admission of students enable these students to participate effectively in their studies. | ✓ A full review undertaken during 2009 and recommendations implemented in 2010  
✓ Monitoring of pathway providers  
✓ Pathway providers requiring their students to undertake UniPrep  
✓ Results of Capstone research correlated against entry pathways |
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|   | ✓ELEC  
|   | ✓Workshops by Career and Employment Services  
|   | ✓IELTS4grads subsidy  
|   | ✓Student Linx  |
|   | Development of English language proficiency is integrated with curriculum design, assessment practices and course delivery through a variety of methods. |
|   | ✓ELEC  
|   | ✓GELI staff involved in GIHE IoC working party  |
|   | Students’ English language development needs are diagnosed early in their studies and addressed, with ongoing opportunities for self-assessment. |
|   | ✓ELEC delivered in students’ first semester  
|   | ✓Diagnostic testing of ELEC students  
|   | ✓Amber Alert Assessment  |
|   | International students are supported from the outset to adapt to their academic, sociocultural and linguistic environments. |
|   | ✓ExcelL embedded in ELEC  
|   | ✓EnglishHELP “Find Your Voice Across Cultures” workshops  
|   | ✓Student Linx  |
|   | International students are encouraged and supported to enhance their English language development through effective social interaction on and off campus. |
|   | ✓Student Linx  
|   | ✓Community Engagement officer appointed by GBS  |
|   | Universities use evidence from a variety of sources to monitor and improve their English language development activities. |
|   | ✓Research group for ELEC  
|   | ✓IELTS4Grads data collected  
|   | ✓Student and tutor surveys  |
ELEC research aims

- To measure change in English language proficiency of international students who undertake ELEC
- To measure change in educational outcomes by international students who undertake ELEC
- To demonstrate that an ELEC improves the above when implemented as an early intervention strategy
- To investigate the correlation between language proficiency, language achievement and overall academic outcomes.
- To investigate the cohorts’ experiences in engaging in learning English in terms of their motivation, investment and outcomes (qualitative).
ELEC research methodology

Cohort 1 S2 2009: Non-ELEC students
Cohort 2 S2 2010: ELEC students

- IELTS pre first semester
- IELTS post first semester
- Qualitative interviews
- IELTS at degree exit
- Correlation against GPAs
References


