Completion Report
Project Supported by LTC/OBA Funding*

(Period covered: 02/09/08 – 31/08/09)

Part I: General Information

Funding Source (please tick ✓ as appropriate): ☐ LTC √ OBA Funding

Project Code:	8B1X	**Host Department:** ELC/FB

Project Title: Developing measures and support for English language related Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme outcomes, and evaluating achievement of these outcomes by individual students and the BBA Programme as a whole

Project Team:	Project Leader (Name & Dept):	Team Member(s) (Name & Dept):
	Bruce Morrison (ELC) Susana Yuen (AF)	Julia Chen (ELC) David Wong (ELC)

Part II: Project Details

1. Financial Information

(a) Overview

Approved Funding:	Additional Funding Received (if any):	Total Funding Received:
	+	=

Source of Additional Funding: Dean(FB)'s Reserve

(b) Project Expenditure

¹ Please give reasons for the revised budget and quote the relevant authority's approval reference where appropriate.

2. Project Schedule

	Start date (dd/mm/yyyy):	Completion date (dd/mm/yyyy):
Dates as Stated in Original Proposal:	02/07/2008	28/08/2009

1

	Start date (dd/mm/yyyy):	Completion date (dd/mm/yyyy):
Actual Start and Completion Dates:	02/07/2008	28/08/2009

	Total no. of extension(s) obtained :	Obtained during the project period:
Project Period Extension(s) (if any):	time(s)	For a total of month(s)

Reason(s) for Extension(s) (if any):	

* *LTC: Learning and Teaching Committee*
OBA Funding: Funding for Promoting Outcome-Based Approaches to Student Learning

3. Project Implementation

(a) Project objectives

This project was intended as a pilot project focusing on the extent to which programme outcomes are achieved via the assessment of students' English communication ability in content subject assignments.

Specifically, on the completion of the BBA programme, the two related learning outcomes expected of the students are that they are able to:

i. communicate verbally in English and Putonghua at a level of effectiveness sufficient for a business presentation or general conversation with a mono-lingual speaker of each language

ii. communicate in writing in English and in Chinese, at a level of effectiveness sufficient for general business communication.

In addition to meeting the major project objectives listed below it is envisaged that the experience derived from the project will allow both the Faculty and the ELC to better plan for the implementation of English language provision in the four-year undergraduate programme.

The major project objectives were to:

i. Develop a set of outcome-based assessment criteria and descriptors to align with FB's two BBA Programme outcomes that relate to English language communication

ii. Provide review lectures for FB students focusing on the skills and language needed for the assessment referred to in below

iii. Assess individual students' achievement of FB's two BBA Programme outcomes that relate to English language communication, through language assessment of an authentic workplace task embedded in the Programme

iv. Provide (formative) feedback to students which aims to help them achieve the Programme learning outcomes

v. Provide (summative) feedback to FB with regard to the overall achievement of Programme learning outcomes

vi. Confirm alignment of GSLPA assessment outcomes and FB Programme outcomes relating to English language communication

(b) Overview of specific work undertaken for achieving the project objectives

All objectives have been achieved according to original schedule except for Objective 1 as noted below.

Objective i: As noted in the Progress Report, following initial discussion regarding the scope of the project, the project team decided that, since this was to be a "pilot study", we would gather more meaningful data if we restricted ourselves to written communication. The project therefore addressed only the second of the two BBA learning outcomes which relates to written language.

Criteria were developed by ELC staff in close collaboration with FB staff members to align with programme English language learning outcome, and used to assess both assignments. (Appendix 1)

Objective ii: Lectures and webpages posted online (Appendix 2).

Objective iii: Achieved for 700+ students who took MM2711 in 2008/9 Semester 1, and AF2010 in 2008/9 Semester 2.

Objective iv: Achieved for 700+ students who took MM2711 in 2008/9 Semester 1, and AF 2010 in 2008/9 Semester 2

Two evaluation questions sent to all students (of whom 101 responded) and focus group interview (n=6) indicated that:

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- 81% of students **felt the web-based ELC language input feedback** had been useful. However, only slightly more than 30% felt it had been more than "a little" useful and only 3% felt it had been useful "a lot". Comments from questionnaire respondents and a focus group interview with 6 students included reference to the help the input provided in terms of structuring and organising the essay (5).

- With regard **to the feedback from the teacher**, similar results were recorded with 82% deeming it useful approximately 35% feeling it had been more than "a little" useful and only 5% feeling it had been useful "a lot". In their comments, students stated that teacher feedback helped highlight their grammar problems (8) and weaknesses in writing (13).

These results suggest that while students generally found the feedback provided by ELC staff to be useful it is unlikely that they value it to an extent that would, in most cases, mean that they read it carefully, analyse their mistakes and take remedial action.

A summary of questionnaire and interview data can be found in Appendix 3.

Objective v: summary feedback sent to FB on 11 November 2009. (See Appendix 4)

Objective vi: achieved and summarised below.

The GSLPA provides a measure of how well graduating students carry out communicative tasks in English in typical workplace situations. In terms of written English, students are assessed on their ability to write typical workplace documents such as memos, emails, letters and reports. According to their performance on the GSLPA, an "average" Faculty of Business students "can produce relevant, interpretable and generally well organised texts that address task requirements" and the student's "vocabulary is generally adequate, and grammar errors do not obscure communication".

These descriptors were found to align with the FB Programme outcomes relating to English language communication namely:

i. communicate verbally in English and Putonghua at a level of effectiveness sufficient for a business presentation or general conversation with a mono-lingual speaker of each language.

ii. communicate in writing in English and in Chinese, at a level of effectiveness sufficient for general business communication.

(c) Difficulties encountered, if any, which have affected progress, and remedial actions taken

The major difficulties encountered were logistical. #1 and 2 below were noted in the Progress Report:

1. Unequal number of students per semester meant a lighter marking load in semester 1 but consequently a much heavier load in semester 2.

2. Since much time was needed on the logistics of scripts collection and return, (i.e. collecting student assessment scripts, distributing one set to FB staff and another set to ELC staff, as well as ELC compiling the scripts and teacher feedback before passing them to FB for returning to students,) the actual time that could be spent on marking was less than the normal turnaround time. This added much stress to the markers and the Project Team.

3. Despite the effort made by both ELC and FB, there was a significant number of students who reported that they had been unaware of the ELC online language support.

(d) Deliverables/useful findings/good practices emerged

See sections 3(a) and 3(b) above, and Appendices 1- 4.

(e) Dissemination activities taken/planned to sustain impact

(a) Rating and comments/recommendations on the following areas of the project

(please put a ✓ in 1 of the following 2 ratings and provide comments)

1. FB staff workshop to be held in Semester 2, 2009/10

2. ELC staff development session to held in Semester 2, 2009/10

3. Conference paper to be presented at the Hong Kong Language Centre Symposium - "Challenges of the 4-year curriculum for English Language Centres in Hong Kong" - to be held on 3 June, 2010
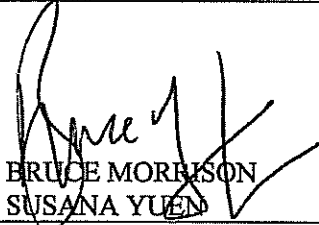
(f) Self-evaluation or additional information/remarks

Despite the difficulties encountered, as stated above, we are satisfied with the outcome of the project. In alignment with the FB Programme outcomes, we have developed a set of criteria for evaluating English proficiency embedded in the assessments of two BBA core subjects. Through the project, we have identified the major weaknesses our students display with regard to each dimension of the criteria: organisation, language and conventions. This will be definitely helpful in curriculum design for English-related subjects for business students.

While we recognise the benefits from including the component of English proficiency in the assessment of all BBA subjects, it requires tremendous resources for grading and co-ordination, especially if the subject has an enrollment of approximately 800 students for a single semester. After identifying such logistical problems, it is important for the Faculty of Business to provide support for students to improve their communication in written English, in order to meet the relevant BBA language programme outcome.

Finally, we would like to place on record that the completion of this project owes much to the co-operation and assistance offered by the ELC colleagues who were responsible for grading and the FB colleagues who taught the subjects AF2110 and MM2771.

Name of Project
Leaders:

BRUCE MORRISON
SUSANA YUEN

(in block letters)

Date: 20 November, 2009

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Areas	Rating		Comments and Recommendations
	Satisfactory	*Needing attention*	
Overall financial management/ use of funding	✓		
Overall project progress	✓		
Outputs /deliverables / dissemination	✓		
Overall rating / comments on the project (Please suggest remedial actions if the rating is 'Needing attention')	✓		

(b) Issues requiring the attention of FLTC/Director of School and/or the funding authority

(c) Outputs/deliverables/good practices of the project that can be shared with other subjects, programmes or departments within the Faculty, or with the wider PolyU community

(d) Additional comments/remarks

A great deal of time + effort has gone into this project — the emphasis on improving written English needs to be ongoing —

Name of D/SLTC Chair
(or HoD/Director of School): ___VANESSA SCOTT___   Date: ___15 Dec 2009___
(in block letters)

^ *To be prepared by HoD/Director of School if the PL is also the D/SLTC Chair, or if the Centre/Unit/Office does not have a DLTC.*

Part IV : Evaluation by FLTC/Director of School

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(a) Overall rating on the project (please put a ✓ in 1 of the following 2 ratings):
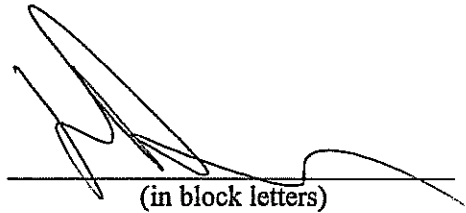
☑ Satisfactory

☐ Needing attention

(b) Overall comments and recommendations on the project:

This project has taught us a good deal about the difficulties of assessing English separately within other subjects.

(c) Issues requiring the attention of the funding authority:

Name of FLTC Chair/
Director of School: _____   Date: 2 December 2009
                        (in block letters)

The Director of School or HoD of the Centre/Unit/Office needs not fill this part if he/she has already commented in Part III.

Part V: Response & Follow-up Plan by Project Leader

(Response and follow-up plan is required from the Project Leader if there is any area rated as 'needing attention' in Part III and/or IV.)

Name of Project Leader: _____   Date: _____
                              (in block letters)

Signature of Project Leader	Signature of D/SLTC (or HoD)@	Signature of FLTC/ Director of School
(Name in block letters)	(Name in block letters)	(Name in block letters)

@ *To be signed by HoD if the PL is also the DLTC Chair, or if the Centre/Unit/Office does not have a DLTC; leave this blank if the PL is also the SLTC Chair.*

The Project Leader and D/SLTC Secretary should each keep a copy of this *Completion Report* for records.
A copy of this *Completion Report* will be submitted along with the *F/SLTC Annual Report (Form 20)*
to LTC/WGOBE as a supporting document.

Appendix 1 - ELC/FB OBA Project 2008/9
English Writing assessment criteria

Level 2   A, B, C and D grades should reflect some of the features in the "+" grades above and below them.

F Inadequate		
Organisation	Information structure	• Generally ineffective
	Cohesion and coherence	• Generally incoherent, causing severe strain for the reader
Language	Grammar	• Errors impede communication seriously; only very simple sentence structures/patterns attempted
	Vocabulary	• Very inappropriate and inadequate, causing obvious communication breakdowns
	Style and tone	• Mostly inappropriate
Conventions	Layout and format	• Frequently inappropriate
	Referencing	• Incorrect, inadequate or missing
	Word length	• Inappropriate; far below/beyond the requirements; displaying serious problems with conciseness and preciseness

D A balance of features from D+ and F grades

D+ Barely adequate		
Organisation	Information structure	• Generally ineffective
	Cohesion and coherence	• Frequent breakdown in coherence
Language	Grammar	• Many intrusive errors; narrow range of sentence structures/patterns
	Vocabulary	• Generally inappropriate and inadequate
	Style and tone	• Inappropriate
Conventions	Layout and format	• Sometimes inappropriate; contains some major mistakes
	Referencing	• Sometimes correct; contains some major mistakes
	Word length	• Generally inappropriate; noticeably below/beyond the requirements; displaying some problems with conciseness and preciseness

C A balance of features from C+ and D+ grades

C+ Wholly satisfactory		
Organisation	Information structure	• Mostly effective
	Cohesion and coherence	• Reasonably effective; shows a reasonable range and appropriate use of cohesive devices
Language	Grammar	• Reasonably accurate with occasional intrusive errors; reasonably wide range of sentence structures/patterns
	Vocabulary	• Reasonably appropriate and adequate
	Style and tone	• Reasonably appropriate
Conventions	Layout and format	• Appropriate most of the time; contains some minor mistakes or oversight
	Referencing	• Correct most of the time; contains some minor mistakes or oversight
	Word length	• Generally appropriate; may be just below/beyond the requirements

B A balance of features from B+ and C+ grades

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B+ Very good

Organisation	Information structure	• Generally effective
	Cohesion and coherence	• Generally well maintained; shows a range of cohesive devices
Language	Grammar	• Very accurate; wide range of sentence structures/patterns supporting clear messages
	Vocabulary	• Generally appropriate and wide ranging
	Style and tone	• Generally appropriate
Conventions	Layout and format	• Appropriate; may contain very few minor mistakes or oversight
	Referencing	• Largely correct; may contain very few minor mistakes or oversight
	Word length	• Appropriate; or within the requirements

A A balance of features from A+ and B+ grades

A+ Outstanding

Organisation	Information structure	• Very effective
	Cohesion and coherence	• Very effectively maintained; shows a good range of cohesive devices, making the writing interesting to read
Language	Grammar	• Accurate; wide range of sentence structures/patterns supporting sophisticated and clear messages
	Vocabulary	• Appropriate and wide ranging
	Style and tone	• Appropriate
Conventions	Layout and format	• Appropriate
	Referencing	• Correct throughout
	Word length	• Appropriate; or within the requirements

Appendix 2 - FB-OBA Project: Language inputs for students (2008-09 Semester 2)

* ELC hyperlinks.

Articles

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/ErrorCorrection/frameArt.htm
* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/MEng/common/articles.html
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/eslart.html
http://www.edufind.com/ENGLISH/grammar/Determiners2.cfm
http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/l2the.html

Cohesive devices and coherence

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/ELSC/material/Writing/coherenc.htm
http://new-eclass.blogspot.com/2008/02/connectives.html
http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/resources/cohesion_and_coherence.pdf
http://uwp.duke.edu/wstudio/resources/ppt/StyleCCC.pdf
http://grammar.about.com/od/developingparagraphs/a/cohsignals.htm

Introductions and conclusions

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CiLL/eap/essayintro.htm
* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/MEng/dissertation/conclusion.html
http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/intro.html
http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/introductions.html
http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/conclusions.html
http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/conclude.html

Parts of speech

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/MEng/common/part.html
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/730/01/
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/index2.html#parts

Plurals

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/MEng/common/singular.html
* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/ErrorCorrection/singular_and_plural_nouns1.htm
http://www.meredith.edu/grammar/plural.htm
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_spelnoun.html

(continued)

Subject-verb agreement

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/cill/exercises/sva.htm

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/MEng/common/subject.html

http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/sentencebasics/verbsubjectagreement/

http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/grammar/subverag.html

Tenses

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/exercises/choosing-verbs.htm

http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/usetense.html

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_tensec.html

http://www.englishtenseswithcartoons.com

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/esl/esltensverb.html

Topic sentence

* http://dev.elc.polyu.edu.hk/SN/EAPproject/writing_3_3_body.html

* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/elsc/material/Writing/organizi.htm

http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/partopic.html

http://www.eslbee.com/topic_sentences.htm

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/paragraphs.shtml

http://web.mit.edu/writing/Writing_Process/topicsentence.html

Video lecture - the MM2711 essay on ethics in marketing

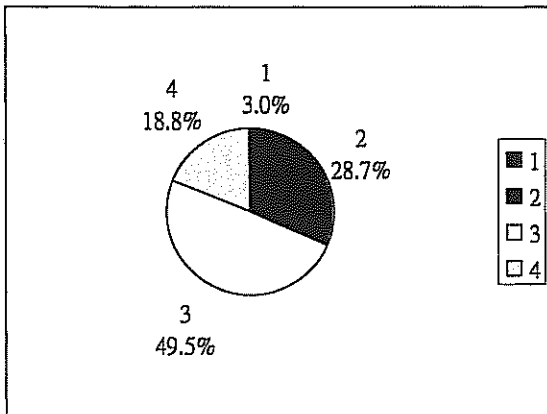* http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/Subjects/MM2711/

Appendix 3 - summary of questionnaire and interview data

Faculty of Business (FB) and English Language Center (ELC) Outcome-based Education Project

Q1. Did the ELC language inputs help you write more effectively in the essay and the written test? (Please underline one option)

    1. Yes, a lot   2. Yes, quite a lot   3. Yes, a little   4. No, not at all

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	3.0	3.0
	2	29	28.7	31.7
	3	50	49.5	81.2
	4	19	18.8	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	

Pie chart: 1 = 3.0%, 2 = 28.7%, 3 = 49.5%, 4 = 18.8%

Positive comments:

Themes (from questionnaires and interviews)	N	Mentioned in the interview?	Comments
It helps me in referencing.	2		
It helps me write more formally.	3	1	
It helps me in the structure and organization of an essay.	5	2	
The learning materials (video links, websites, CILL's online resources) are useful.	6	4	
It helps me a lot in grammar and spellings.	1		
It can help me know my mistakes.	4		
It can teach me how to write a good essay effectively.	2		
It can enlarge my vocabulary needed for formal academic writing.	2		
It is helpful in providing a lot of examples of the essays and guidelines for writing.	2	1	
It can help me write in a more fluent way.	1		

It can help me know how to use hedging skills.	1		
ELC teachers or courses play a more important role than the ELC booklets and other resources.	5		
It can help me review the skills that I have learned.	1		
It can help me know the format of academic writing.	3		
It provides me more chances to practice my writing.	3		
A wide range of topics are covered in the online resources.	1		
Homework is helpful.	1		

Negative comments:

Themes	N	Mentioned in the interview?	Comments
I have never heard of ELC inputs.	2	3	
Video lectures are not helpful at all.	1		
I understand the requirement but the techniques are hard to apply.	1	2	

Themes in interviews:

| Questions	Feedback
What would you expect?	➢ Referencing is difficult for me. Detailed referencing will be more helpful.
Does the criteria sheet help you in terms how we are going to mark and how you are going to write your essay?	➢ It's clear but it's too abstract. We don't understand the levels.
Does the criteria sheet help you focus on the things that you need to do? How did you use it?	➢ I will make a draft of the essay, focus on the items and make some improvements according to the criteria especially in the structure, coherence and all the grammar and vocabulary mistakes. ➢ I can use it as a reminder and a checklist.
Does the 10% English make you think about English really?	➢ The 10 % matters. The academic part from MM or AF could be really similar so what differs is the ELC marks. ➢ The first assessment is a report so I have a lot of time to pay attention to grammar. But the second assessment is mid-term exam. I remember it's accounting course. When I did the essay question I wasn't thinking about any English grammar. I even don't have time to think how to answer the questions so I just put

		the words together. When I see the outcome there are so many mistakes.
About the videos	➤	Is it possible for ELC to produce some video that explain the marking criteria clearly? For example, this kind of essay can get A. This kind of essay can get B. Some examples can help us understand more about what you are looking at.

Q2. Was the ELC teacher feedback useful in helping you to improve your English writing skills? (Please underline one option)

1. Yes, a lot   2. Yes, quite a lot   3. Yes, a little   4. No, not at all

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 1	5	5.0	5.0
2	26	25.7	30.7
3	52	51.5	82.2
4	18	17.8	100.0
Total	101	100.0	
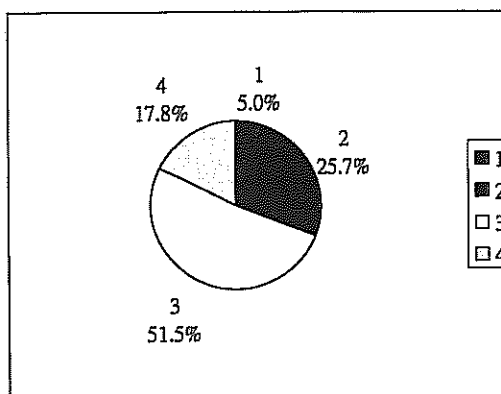
Positive comments:

| Themes (from questionnaires and interviews)	N	Mentioned in the interview?	Comments
It points out my grammatical mistakes.	8	1	
WAP, I got feedback from Help desk and revised my paper.	2		
Some major mistakes are marked.	1		
It taught me how to improve my English and correct my mistakes.	8	2	
It helps us recognize our weaknesses or mistakes in our writing.	13	1	
It's quite objective, instructive and critical.	2	1	
It points out Chinglish expression and logic	1		
It can improve the organization of my writing.	1		
It can help us write essays with objective styles.	1		
It makes me aware of the importance of introduction and conclusion which can makes the essays more 'complete'	1		
Criticize my point of view and give me advice.	1		
At least I know the usual way to compose business letters.	1		
I realize how to make my essay to be comprehensive. If I can get the feedback form it will be better.	1		
It gives me some useful suggestions in organizing my essay.	1		
Every time we only got the score from English marker but there is no one who shows up and explain why we got that score. They just simply underline some errors. I don't find it helpful.	1		

Negative comments:

Themes	N	Mentioned in the interview?	Comments
Without continuous evaluation or certain degrees of follow-up, the feedback on selected essays didn't help me much in writing.	3	2	
Mistakes can't be recognized.	1		
I can only see criticism but not useful comments from the feedback. Some of my classmates found that the marking of ELC teachers are wrong. We do feel some of the marking are not reliable since ELC teachers need to mark many essays and tests at the same time. They may not have time to read through the assignment.	1		Also mentioned in Q3
I still have no idea on improving my skills.	1		

Themes in interviews:

Questions	Feedback
Do you think it's important to put it in bullet points?	➢ Feedback in bullet points is better than a paragraph of writing.
Do you think marking is very strict?	➢ Yes, it's fair to everyone, but it may be disappointing. If we want to make some improvements it's very useful. ➢ It's very strict. I think the range should be wider.
Do you want the ELC teachers to mark it?	➢ Yes. They will follow the criteria directly. ➢ Feedback is important. It did put more pressure on me when I was told that essays were marked by ELC teachers. ➢ I do think it makes difference. ELC teachers are more professional.

Q3. Do you think English should be assessed in FB subjects? (Please underline one option)

1. Yes   2. No
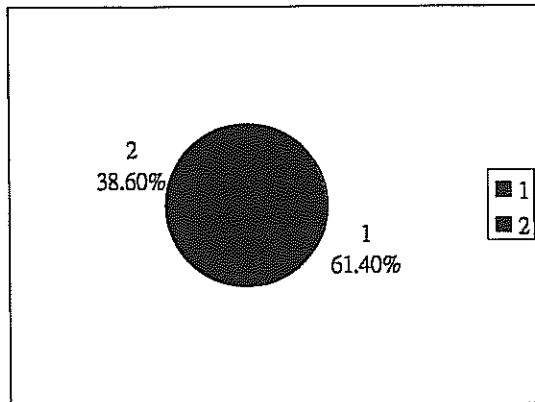
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	62	61.4	61.4
	2	39	38.6	100.0
	Total	101	100.0	

Positive comments:

Themes	N	Mentioned in the interviews?	Comments
English is really important.	2		
English is very important for our future career, so we need to be well-prepared and this can also enhance out awareness of using correct forms of English.	10		English seems to be important for one's success in a business field.
English is important for the expression and understanding of academic writing.	1		
Language is the base of every assessment.	1		
Assessing English in FB subjects can help us improve our English levels.	4		
I think English should only be assessed in the long essay assessments and significant examinations but not the minor quizzes and short essays.	1		
HK is an international city. It is necessary for students to communicate with others. English is important for business students.	5		
Writing a good essay can easily get a pass in exam.	1		
It provides an extra incentive for students to focus more on English and improve their language, including myself. It conveys a message to students that English is important.	9	1	
It is more objective for another to assess English written part.	1	1	
It is helpful in interviews.	1		
Students are expected to be capable to express their ideas in fluent and correct English.	1		
All subjects in FB use English as the medium of teaching; it cannot be separated from FB subjects.	1		

Written skill is important when you do the business work.	2		
We need some directions on writing assessment.	1		
A reasonable English standard is essential in expressing business concepts.	1		
It will be better if ELC English markers could show us and explain why and how they give us scores.	1		

Negative comments:

Themes	N	Mentioned in the interviews?	Comments
Since the exam time is limited, it's difficult to balance between English and knowledge.	4	1	
I think the target of assessment changes. English should not be assessed in FB subjects. On the other hand, with more MC questions, we can show our understanding of academic writing.	3		
It's not fair because foreign exchange students often get very high marks normally.	1		
Language can be improved by continuous learning process rather than a single assessment through test or assignment; Resources can be used more effectively by separating the English training and the Business teaching courses.	1		
English has directly affected the content and impression mark already in the first place. If English proficiency is marked separately, it seems that the same weakness causes double mark deduction.	1		
The content is more important and English should be assessed by ELC subjects.	2		
English is not useful.	1		
The language subject may affect the whole grade of the project and GPA.	1		
I do not know the English names for some specific terms in FB subjects.	1		
It is not necessary to assess.	1		
It only reflects the proficiency of students. Most of the students received disappointment but not motivation in improving	1		
This helps little in improving English and prohibits my learning process.	1		
The way English is assessed should mainly focus on the application of the language, not the academic ones like grammar.	1		
But I think in some subjects, the proportion of English score is too large. I think in those subjects, the understanding and opinions about the subject are more important. Besides, I also want to say something about the English in FB subjects. Sometimes we find that the English requirement is not consistent with the subject	5		

requirement, such as structure.			
FB subjects require the clearness of presentation and do not depend much on English.	2		
The marking procedure takes a much longer time and some FB staff does not like the English checking part either. I think including a few marks for fluency of writing in the total mark of assessment is enough.	1		

Appendix 4 – summary feedback to FB

OBA project: Developing measures and support for English language related Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme outcomes, and evaluating achievement of these outcomes by individual students and the BBA Programme as a whole

Summative feedback regarding Faculty-wide achievement of BBA Programme outcomes related to English language

The BBA programme learning outcome (LO) relating to English language is: *Communicate in writing in English, at a level of effectiveness sufficient for general business communication*

In this feedback report, which aims to present summative feedback relating to students' achievement, data from two sources will be considered in relation to the Programme LO:

1. Student grades on the two assessments marked for language by ELC academic staff.

2. ELC academic staff analysis of problems faced by students in performing the assessments

1. Students grades

Students were graded by ELC academic staff on three criteria in Assessment 1(A1): organisation, language and adherence to conventions, and two criteria in Assessment 2 (A2): organization and language. Explanation of these criteria can be found in Appendix 1. Students were then assigned an overall grade which accounted for 10% of the total assessment grade.

A. Overall grade

Correlation between individual students' overall grades on A1 and A2 was not significant at the 0.05 level, but this is to be expected since the second assessment did not include the "conventions" criteria. Correlations between individual student grades on the "language" and "organization" criteria are discussed below.

If we take C+ as the "wholly satisfactory" grade (as per PolyU Academic Regulations), as can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1 below, in both A1 and A2 approximately 68% of FB students demonstrated a wholly satisfactory level of linguistic performance (or above) on the two assessments. Of those that did not achieve this level of performance, a further 21% and 24% achieved a C grade ("satisfactory") in A1 and A2 respectively. Thus, the percentage of students who clearly did not achieve the language learning outcomes on A1 and A2 (i.e. who attained a grade below "satisfactory") were approximately 11% and 7% respectively.

Table 1: Students' overall grades on A1 and A2

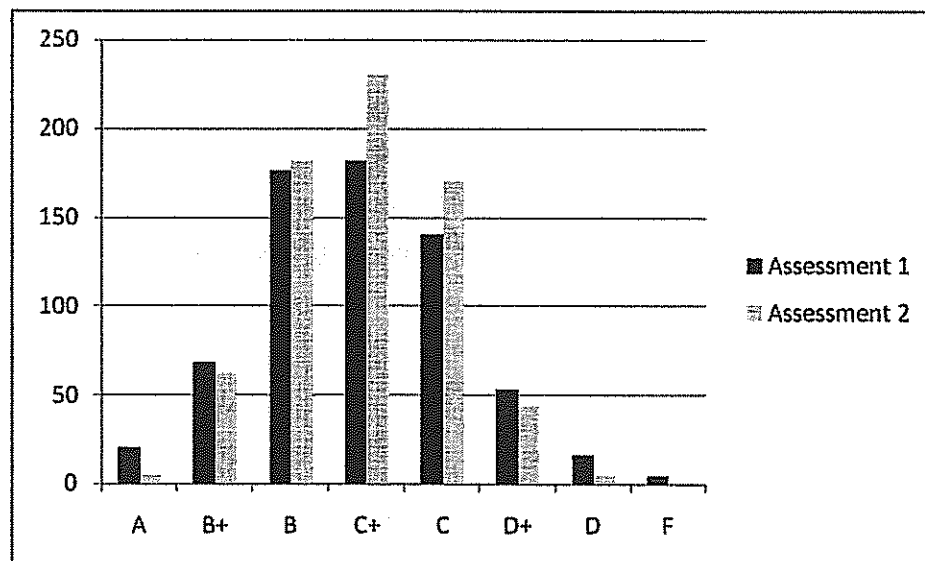|	Frequency		Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent	
	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2
A	20	5	3.0	0.7	3.0	0.7
B+	68	62	10.3	8.9	13.4	9.6
B	176	182	26.7	26.1	40.1	35.7
C+	182	230	27.6	33.0	67.7	68.6
C	140	170	21.2	24.4	88.9	93.0
D+	53	44	8.0	6.3	97.0	99.3
D	16	5	2.4	0.7	99.4	100.0
F	4	0	.6	0	100.0	
Total	659	698	100.0			

Figure 1: Students' overall grades on A1 and A2

B. Component grades

In A1, students were graded against three criteria: language, organization and conventions; and against the first two of these for A2.

Students' performance with regard to the component grades in the two assessments, can be seen in Figures 2 and 3 below.
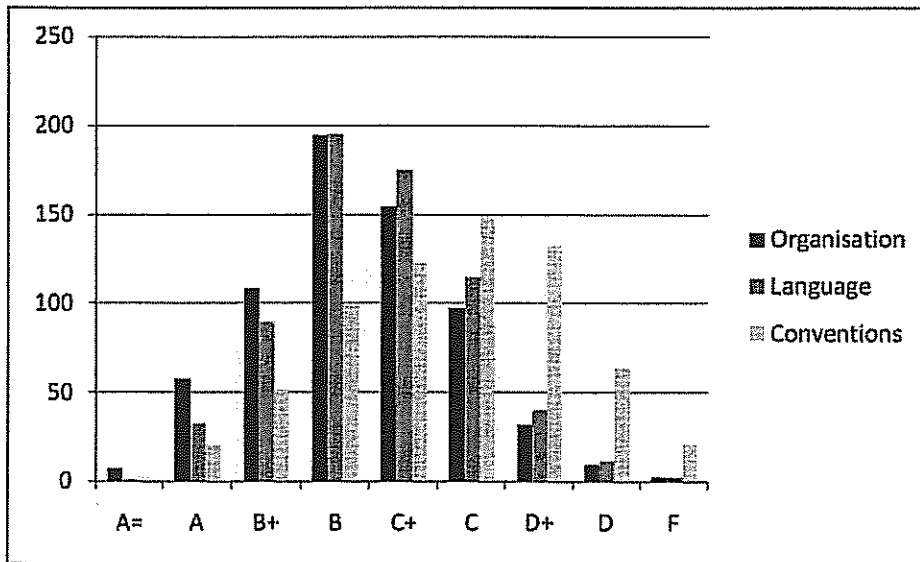

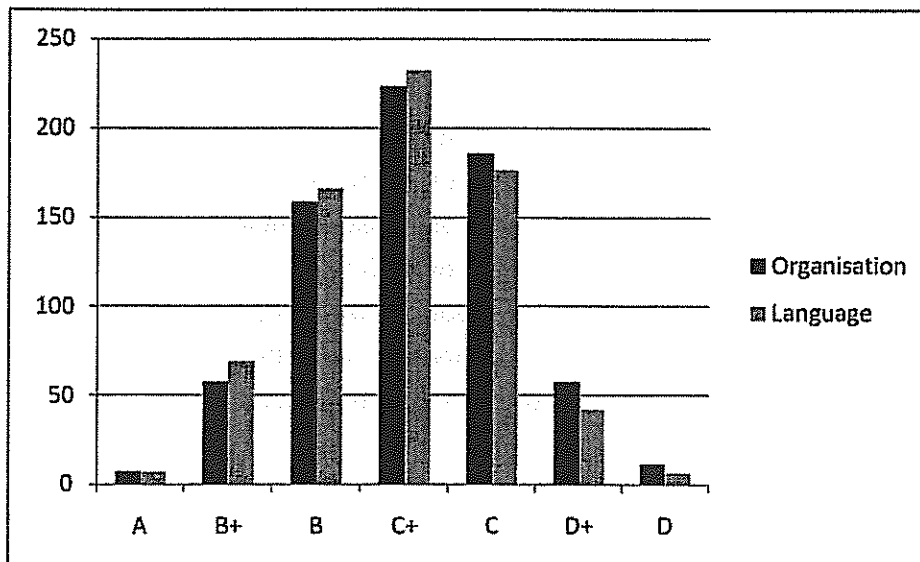Figure 2: Component grade performance in Assessment 1

Figure 3: Component grade performance in Assessment 2

i) Students' performance on the "Language" component

Table 2: Students' grades for "Language" on A1 and A2

	Frequency		Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent	
	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2
A+	1		.2		.2	
A	32	7	4.9	1.0	5.0	1.0
B+	89	69	13.5	9.9	18.5	10.9
B	195	166	29.6	23.8	48.1	34.7
C+	175	232	26.6	33.2	74.7	67.9
C	114	176	17.3	25.2	92.0	93.1
D+	40	42	6.1	6.0	98.0	99.1
D	11	6	1.7	0.9	99.7	100.0
F	2		.3		100.0	
Total	659		100.0			

Correlation between individual students' grades for "language" on A1 and A2 were significant at the 0.05 level, thus indicating that grading was consistent across the two assessments with regard to language criteria.

As regards the overall grades, if we take C+ as the "wholly satisfactory" grade, we can see in Table 2 above, approximately 75% and 68% of students in A1 and A2 respectively demonstrated a wholly satisfactory level (or above) of performance with regard to the component grade of "language" . Of those that did not achieve this level of performance, a further 17% and 25% achieved a C grade ("satisfactory") in A1 and A2 respectively. Thus, the percentage of students who clearly did not perform satisfactorily in terms of "language" on A1 and A2 (i.e. who attained a grade below "satisfactory") were approximately 8% and 7% respectively.

ii) Students' performance on the "Organisation" component

Table 3: Students' grades for "Organisation" on A1 and A2

	Frequency		Valid Percent		Cumulative Percent	
	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2	A 1	A 2
A+	7	0	1.1	0	1.1	0
A	57	7	8.6	1.0	9.7	1.0
B+	108	57	16.4	8.2	26.1	9.2
B	194	158	29.4	22.6	55.5	31.8
C+	154	223	23.4	31.9	78.9	63.8
C	97	185	14.7	26.5	93.6	90.3
D+	31	57	4.7	8.2	98.3	98.4
D	9	11	1.4	1.6	99.7	100.0
F	2	0	.3	0	100.0	
Total	659	698	100.0			

Correlation between individual students' overall grades on A1 and A2 were not significant at the 0.05 level. This is probably due to the students not being given very clear guidelines with regard to the type of text for A2, it being presented to students as an "examination" task rather than an "assignment" as for A1. This may also partly explain why the grades for organisation are lower on A2 than on A1.

However, we can see in Table 3 above, approximately 79% and 64% of students in A1 and A2 respectively demonstrated a wholly satisfactory level (or above) of performance with regard to the component grade of "organisation". Of those that did not achieve this level of performance, a further 15% and 27% achieved a C grade ("satisfactory") in A1 and A2 respectively. Thus, the percentage of students who clearly did not perform satisfactorily in terms of "language" on A1 and A2 (i.e. who attained a grade below "satisfactory") were approximately 6% and 10% respectively.

iii) Students' performance on the "Conventions" component

Table 4: Students' grades for "Conventions" on A1

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
A+	2	.3	.3
A	20	3.0	3.3
B+	51	7.7	11.1
B	98	14.9	25.9
C+	122	18.5	44.5
C	149	22.6	67.1
D+	132	20.0	87.1
D	64	9.7	96.8
F	21	3.2	100.0
Total	659	100.0	

With regard to the component grade for "conventions", the data in Table 4 show that approximately 45% of students in A1 demonstrated a wholly satisfactory level (or above) of performance with regard to the component grade of "conventions" and a further 12% achieved a C grade ("satisfactory"). Thus, the percentage of students who clearly did not perform satisfactorily in terms of "conventions" (i.e. who attained a grade below "satisfactory") was 33%.

C. Discussion

With reference to students' overall grades on the two assessments, it can be judged that the very great majority of FB students are achieving the Programme LO in terms of their writing being *at a level of effectiveness sufficient for general business communication.*

Given that 92% and 93% of students "Language" component grades could be judged as "satisfactory", whereas their grades were lower in the "Organisation" and considerably lower in the "Conventions" component grades (with only 67% judged to be "satisfactory"), we might conclude that, overall, students' general language and organizational skills seem to be adequate. Their discipline-specific writing skills are, however, less so. This would suggest that they are not putting into operation the knowledge and skills that they learned in subject ELC2203 (taken by all UGC-funded undergraduate FB students in the first semester of Year) which covers these.

6

2. ELC academic staff analysis of student problems

The two assessments were analysed to determine the most problematic aspects of students' writing in relation to the three component grade criteria: language, organization and conventions (for A1 only). The students' texts and teachers' feedback were then analysed and common areas of weakness identified, according to problems identified in A1.

A. Common problems in relation to component grade criteria

Quite a large number of common errors were identified in the student texts. These can be summarized in relation to the three component grade criteria as follow.

i) Language (grammar, vocabulary, style and tone)
The main problem with students' writing tended to result from long, rambling sentences with unclear and overuse of pronouns, and overuse and inappropriate use of discourse markers. This leads to problems with coherence and cohesion. Most students' writing contained grammatical errors including a number of basic errors relating to: misuse of tenses, parts of speech, subject-verb agreement, lack and misuse of articles and singular/plural form confusion.

The texts tended to show evidence of limited vocabulary and there were numerous instances of misuse of vocabulary - both semantically and structurally.

Many students showed little awareness of academic style and tone in their writing with examples of over-complex language, journalese, over-personal styles and inappropriate use of vocabulary.

ii) Organisation
Problems with textual organization were evident in very many scripts at all levels - from the sentence and paragraph level up to the whole-text level. Apart from the lack of topic sentences, linking between paragraphs was a particular problem with misuse of connectives leaving the reader to follow the gist of what the writer is trying to say. The use of cohesive devices tends to be basic and mechanical, which sometimes results in it not actually providing textual coherence. Such incoherence is sometimes due to a "copy and paste" approach to the writing task.

A number of texts lacked effective introductions that set out clearly the writer's objectives, clearly identified the topic and introduced the structure of the writing. Likewise, a number of texts lacked a logical conclusion that clearly linked back to the introduction and body.

iii) Conventions

Lack and misuse of referencing was a major problem with sources not being correctly referenced and acknowledged in the text, and reference lists not correctly presented. Some essays included basic problems such as incorrect (or lack of) title, inappropriate layout and formatting, plagiarism, and lack of evidence for claims and "facts".

B. Areas of weakness

Based upon the major problems noted in (A) above, in teachers were asked to judge a number of texts (n=343) in terms of the degree of seriousness for each category of problem each text demonstrated. The overall results in terms of the means can be seen below, with "1" being the most serious.

Table 5: Teacher Feedback Forms - means

(1: 'Serious' 2: 'Quite Serious' 3: 'Few Problems' 4: 'No Problems')

Category	Mean
Organisation	
Introduction: lack, lack of clear focus/coherence	3.07
Topic sentences: lack and/or misuse	3.22
Cohesive devices: lack and or misuse	2.90
Conclusion: lack, lack of clear focus/coherence	3.08
Lack of overall coherence/logic	3.07
Language	
Tenses: misuse	2.99
Subject-verb agreement: misuse	3.20
Plurals: lack and/or misuse	3.13
Basic parts of speech: misuse	3.03
Articles: lack and/or misuse	3.05
Conventions	
In-text referencing: lack and/or misuse	2.11
Reference list: lack and/or misuse	2.54

From this data, it would seem that there are few serious problems overall, with the exception of students' use of conventions which clearly is a cause for concern.

However, if we examine the data in terms of the percentage of students who, for each category, are judged to be experiencing "serious" or "quite serious" problems, the percentages perhaps present a somewhat different picture, as seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Teacher Feedback Forms - degree of problem

Category	Serious/quite serious (%)
Organisation	
Introduction: lack, lack of clear focus/coherence	24
Topic sentences: lack and/or misuse	11
Cohesive devices: lack and or misuse	26
Conclusion: lack, lack of clear focus/coherence	24
Lack of overall coherence/logic	17
Language	
Tenses: misuse	21
Subject-verb agreement: misuse	13
Plurals: lack and/or misuse	14
Basic parts of speech: misuse	19
Articles: lack and/or misuse	15
Conventions	
In-text referencing: lack and/or misuse	66
Reference list: lack and/or misuse	49

Clearly, the area in which students seem to be experiencing the most problems is in the use of writing conventions. While this causes the students' academic writing to be inappropriate within the academic genre, it is perhaps one that is in many ways more easily addressed than others. Certainly, the formatting of the reference list and related matters are fairly formulaic and rely on great part on following fairly clear, easy-to-follow rules. The effective and correct use of in-text referencing requires higher level language proficiency and skills but, since such language usage is well-defined, should also not be too problematic for FB students. Certainly, we feel that problems in this area can be addressed by students referring back to the ELC2203 textbook, consulting with a teacher in the CILL or accessing one or more of the various resources in the Writing section of the CILL website.

We can also see that a sizeable proportion of FB students have problems with the paragraph-level use of English - as manifested in problems encountered with their ability to express themselves coherently – particularly through the use of cohesive

devices such as conjunctions, pronouns and reference devices. Finally, as they and we are aware, approximately 20% are having problems with basic parts of speech and tenses. It is not that they have not been taught these at school, but rather more likely that they have had little opportunity to use their passive knowledge in meaningful contexts for real communication – where their misuse may well have real impact.

Conclusion

The BBA programme learning outcome (LO) relating to English language is: *Communicate in writing in English, at a level of effectiveness sufficient for general business communication.* We feel that overall the students' performance, as judged by the grades awarded them by ELC academic staff members and the analysis of the problems they faced in completing the tasks, demonstrates that, in terms of written language ability, a large majority of the students should be able to achieve this programme outcome. There were however at least 10% whose performance was of concern as outlined above.

The results indicate that these students would benefit from more and repeated English-language provision that builds upon, and reinforces, that which they have already received on ELC credit-bearing subjects. Such provision could be of various types including additional credit-bearing courses, involvement in the ELC's English language enhancement initiatives (i.e. the English Language Enhancement Programme, Speaking Assistance Programme and Writing Assistance Programme), working independently by either working in the Centre for Independent Language Learning or through accessing the Centre's extensive online English language learning provision, or becoming involved in the Centre's English-speaking extra-curricular activity.

5 November, 2009