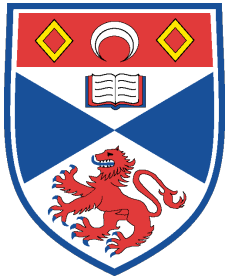
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE



Assessment in EAP – *What's the score?*

English Language Entrance Requirements

What should we be testing?

Dr Karen Ottewell, *Director of Academic Development & Training for International Students*

University of St. Andrews, 28th February 2015

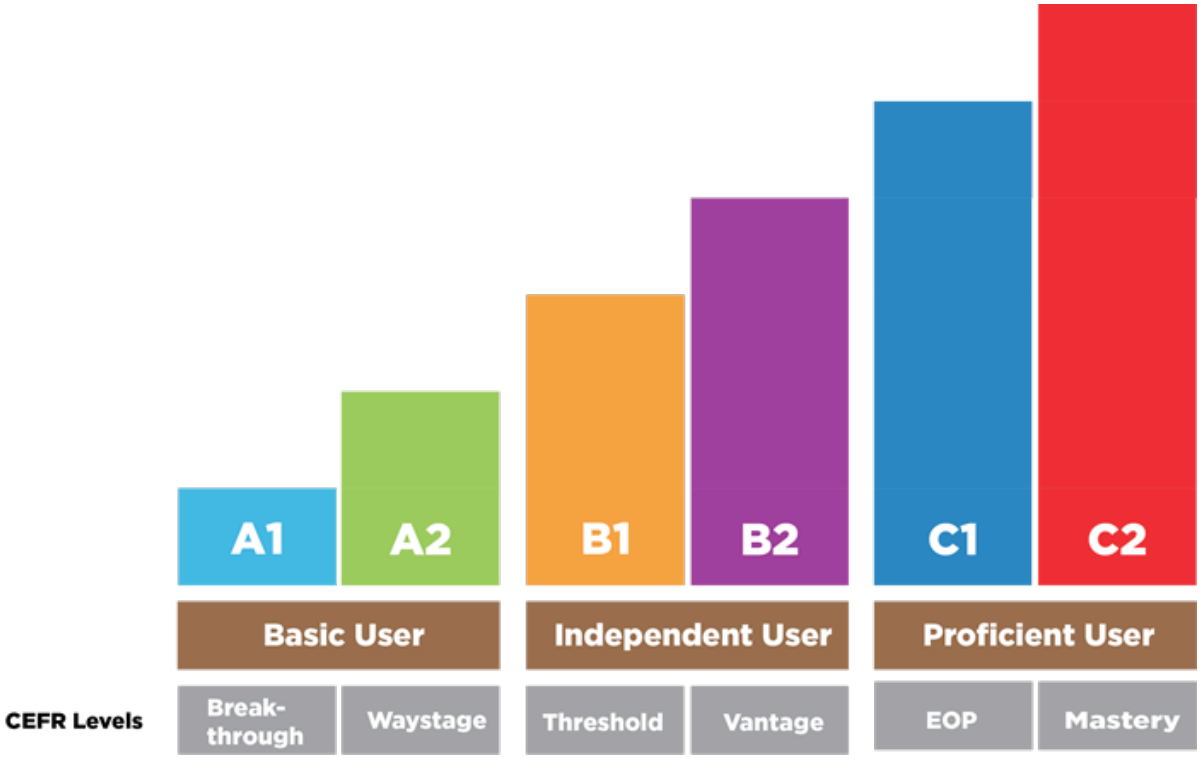
Or: The Stranglehold of SELTs on UK HEIs

Role of SELTs

Language Proficiency

Home Office Compliance

SELTs: An Overview



Home Office
UK Border Agency

The following is the list of Secure English Language Tests that have been assessed as meeting the Home Office's requirements from 1 August 2014. Further information can be found in the following pages.

English Language Test	Awarded By				
	Cambridge English Language Assessment		City and Guilds	Pearson	Trinity College London
	Cambridge English Key (also known as Key English Test)	Cambridge English Preliminary (also known as Preliminary English Test)	City & Guilds International Speaking and Listening IESOL Diploma at A1 level	Pearson Test of English Academic (PTE Academic)	Integrated Skills in English (ISE)
	Cambridge English First (also known as First Certificate in English)	Cambridge English Advanced (also known as Certificate in Advanced English)	City & Guilds International ESOL (IESOL) Diploma		Graded Examination in Spoken English (GESE)
	Cambridge English Proficiency (also known as Certificate of Proficiency in English)	Cambridge English Business Preliminary (also known as Business English Certificate Preliminary)	City & Guilds IESOL together with ISESOL		
	Cambridge English Vantage (also known as Business English Certificate Vantage)	Cambridge English Business higher (also known as Business English Certificate Higher)			
	Cambridge English Legal (also known as International Legal English certificate)	Cambridge English Financial (also known as International Certificate in Financial English)			
	ESOL Skills for Life Entry 1	ESOL Skills for Life Entry 2			
	ESOL Skills for Life Entry 3	ESOL Skills for Life Level 1			
	ESOL Skills for Life Level 2	IELTS (Academic and ~~General~~ Training)			

22 SELTs of which **16** are valid at **B2**.

Of these, **5** are for **Specific Purposes**, **9** are **General English** , and **2 ACADEMIC**.

Valid from 6th April 2015…

Standardised Tests ?

ADVANTAGES

- Standardised benchmark
- Globally accessible
- Secure
- Relative degree of validity
- Relative degree of reliability
- Generalizable results

DISADVANTAGES

- ‘Teaching to the test’
- Unauthentic task types
- Ability scale range
- General vs Academic English
- ‘Testing the test’
- Not discipline- or institution-specific

The ‘Academic Three’

IELTS™

PTE | PEARSON TEST OF ENGLISH Academic

UKBA Highly Trusted Sponsor

ETS TOEFL®

Shortcomings: Task Type

Speaking Part 2 – 2 minutes

Describe a party you enjoyed.
You should say:
Whose party it was and what it was celebrating
Where the party was held and who went to it
What the people did during the party
And explain what you enjoyed about this party

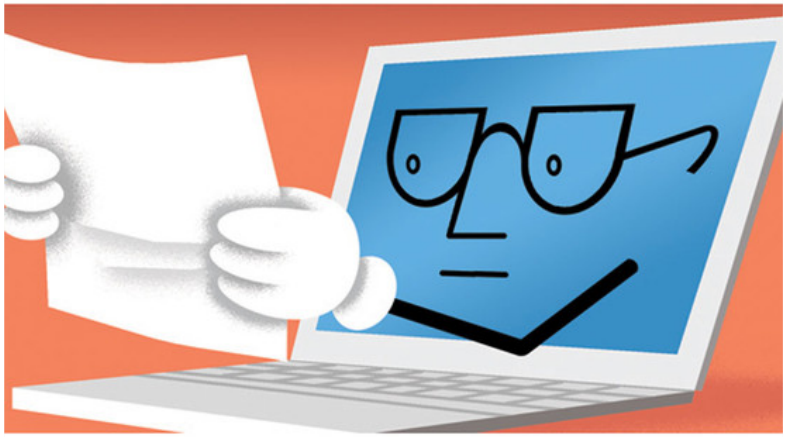
Writing Task 2 – at least 250 words

It is generally believed that some people are born with certain talents, for instance for sport or music, and others are not. However, it is sometimes claimed that any child can be taught to become a good sports person or musician. Discuss both these views and give you own opinion.

In the test that supposedly ***sets the standard*** of academic English, the task types in the **two key active skills** can hardly said to be **academic** in nature – nor indeed, for that matter, **authentic**.

Shortcomings: Pearson PTE

PTE | PEARSON TEST OF ENGLISH Academic



The PTE Academic dispenses with humans completely in that the entire test is **marked by computer**.

Not only a question as to the **reliability of the marking** but, again, far more a question of '***testing the test***' and not the 'student.'

POI about the Pearson PTE…

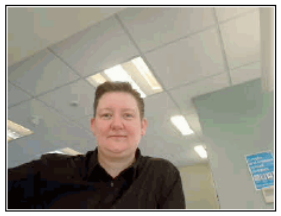
PTE PEARSON TEST OF ENGLISH Academic

PEARSON

Test Taker Score Report

Karen Ottewell

Address:	Downing Place Cambridge CB23EL United Kingdom
Email Address:	ko201@cam.ac.uk
Telephone Number:	+44 1223335004
Date of Birth:	04 August 1972
Country of Citizenship:	United Kingdom
Gender:	Female
Registration ID:	234241940
Report Issue Date:	
Test Date:	16 March 2010
First-Time Test Taker:	Yes
Scores Valid Until:	16 March 2012



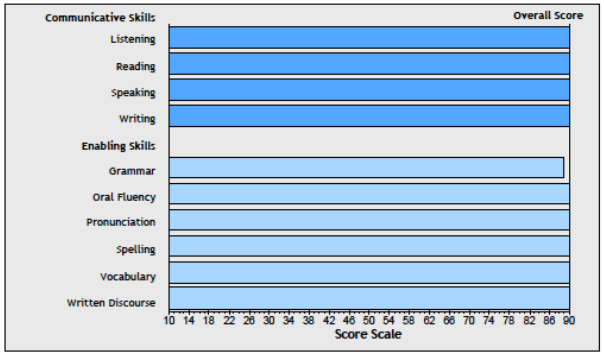
Overall Score: 90

The Overall Score for the PTE Academic is based on the test taker's performance on all items in the test. The scores for Communicative Skills and Enabling Skills are based on the test taker's performance on only those items that pertain to these skills specifically. As many items contribute to more than one Communicative or Enabling Skill, the Overall Score cannot be computed directly from the Communicative Skill scores or from the Enabling Skill scores. The graph below indicates this test taker's Communicative Skills and Enabling Skills relative to his or her Overall Score.

When comparing the Overall Score and the scores for Communicative Skills and Enabling Skills, please be aware that there is some imprecision in all measurement, depending on a variety of factors. For more information on interpreting PTE Academic scores, please refer to *Interpreting the PTE Academic Score Report* which is available at www.pearsonpte.com/pteacademic/scores.

Skills Profile

Communicative Skills	
Listening	90
Reading	90
Speaking	90
Writing	90
Enabling Skills	
Grammar	89
Oral Fluency	90
Pronunciation	90
Spelling	90
Vocabulary	90
Written Discourse	90



NOTE TO INSTITUTIONS: To obtain official, authenticated PTE Academic score information for this test taker, visit our secure website at www.pearsonvue.com/ptescores.

Shortcomings TOEFL iBT

Like the new Pearson Test of Academic English, TOEFL iBT dispense with an actual human for the speaking section and instead the **students speak to a computer**. Again, unauthentic but far more a question of **'testing the test'** and not the 'student.'

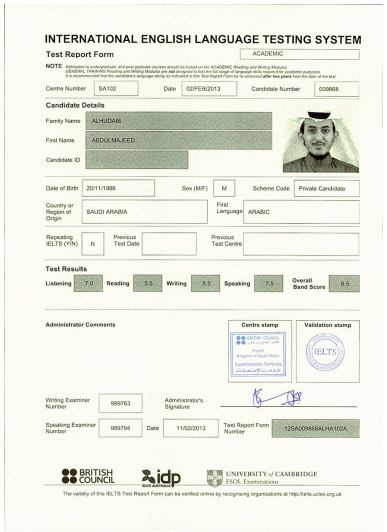
Institution-specific tests

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES

But what do we actually want assessed?

Factors to consider…



INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTING SYSTEM

Test Report Form

ACADEMIC

Centre Number 5A102 Date 02/FEB/2013 Candidate Number 009668

Candidate Details

Family Name ALHUDAIB

First Name ABDULMAJEED

Candidate ID

Date of Birth 20/11/1986 Sex (M/F) M Scheme Code Private Candidate

Country or Region of Origin SAUDI ARABIA First Language ARABIC

Repeating IELTS (Y/N) N Previous Test Date Previous Test Centre

Test Results

Listening 7.0 Reading 5.5 Writing 5.5 Speaking 7.5 Overall Band Score 6.5

Administrator Comments

Centre stamp Validation stamp

Writing Examiner Number 999763 Administrator's Signature

Speaking Examiner Number 989794 Date 11/02/2013 Test Report Form Number 12SA009668ALHA102A

BRITISH COUNCIL idp UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE ESOL Examinations

The validity of this IELTS Test Report Form can be verified online by recognising organisations at http://ielts.ucles.org.uk

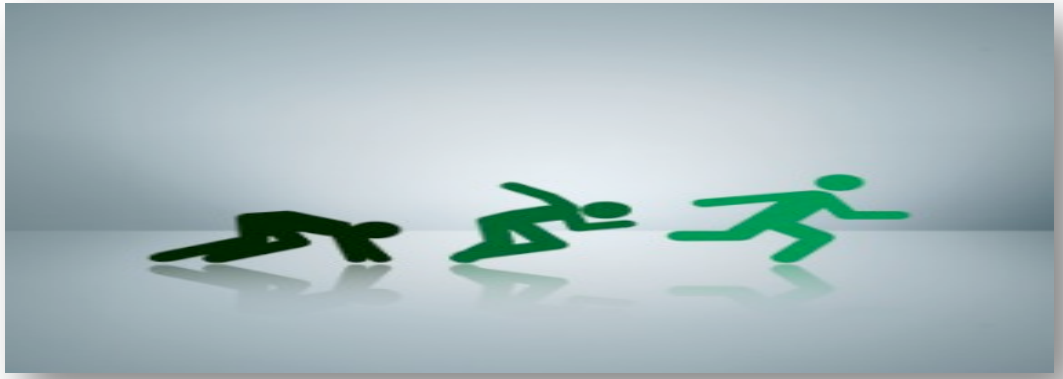
Entrance Level **Entry Point** **Degree Level**

International Students…

Made up 14% of full-time first degree students and 13% of all first degree students

Made up 70% of full-time taught postgraduates and 46% of all taught postgraduates

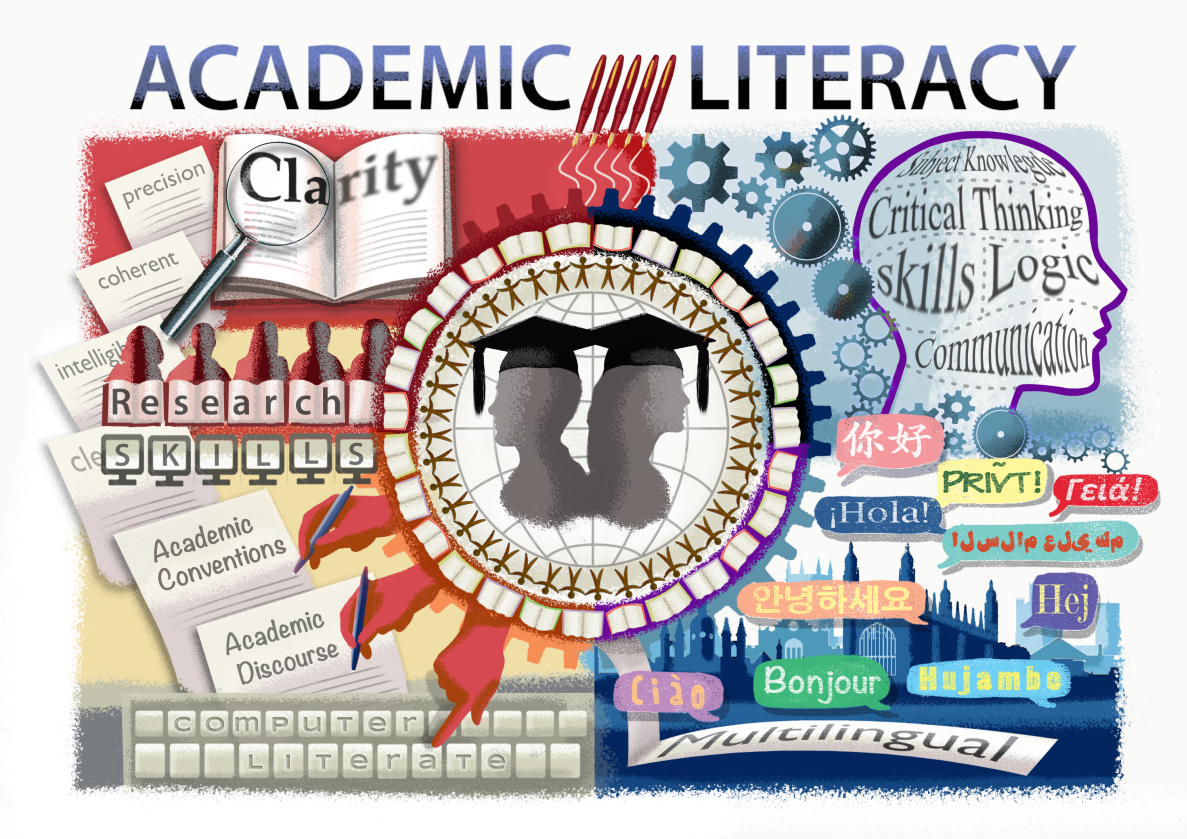
Made up 48% of full-time research degree students and 41% of all research postgraduates



UK Council for International Student Affairs

UKCISA

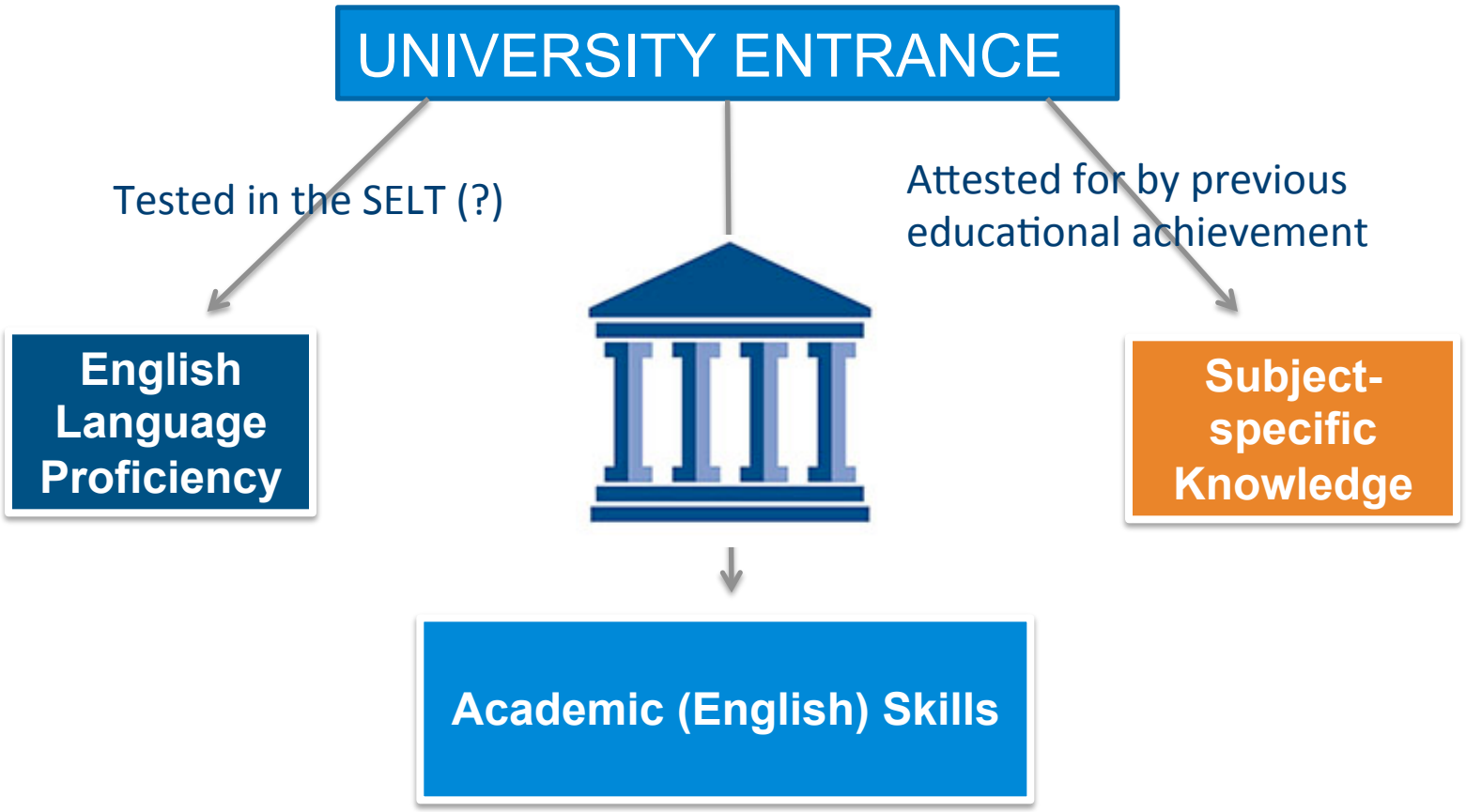
So, what should we be testing?



- a composite of the generic, transferable skills that are required of and developed by academic study and research.*

*Source: http://www.essex.ac.uk/skillscentre/academic_literacy/

Current position:



Why?

The student may have had **no formal training in HE English** prior to their application. This is arguably somewhat less of a concern for UG students, but it is a **very important consideration for PG students**, especially those on **one-year courses…**

International Student Challenges

- **Unclear expectations**: don't know the 'rules'
- Lack required **background knowledge**
- **Language** and **assessment** issues
- Difficulties **participating** and making **friends**
- Know they are seen as a **'problem'**
- Do achieve well but **need support**
- **Achievement gap** in some areas
- **Less satisfied** than UK students overall

Source: J.Ryan, Presentation to Russell Group in Sept/2011

Outstanding Issues

- **3 phases of 'shock'** – culture shock, language shock, **academic shock** (*latter may persist*)
- Lack of understanding of **limitations of IELTS**
- Current '**frontloading**' or '**add on**' leads to **'deficit' approach**
- Takes responsibility away from academics - '**someone else's problem**'
- **Lack of connection** with foundation EAP/programmes
- **Not embedded** within discipline, extra costs
- **Focus on technical skills**, e.g. paraphrasing, plagiarism

Source: J.Ryan, Presentation to Russell Group in Sept/2011

Key Points – UK Situation

- Mainly **postgraduates** – shorter, more intense
- **PGs have less support** from lecturers – 'academic shock'
- Less continuous assessment, more summative – **fewer opportunities for feedback**, support needs to be built in
- Harder to make local friends – UK counterparts less mobile (11:1, *OECD*, 2011)
- **Complacency** – '*they come here for a British education*'

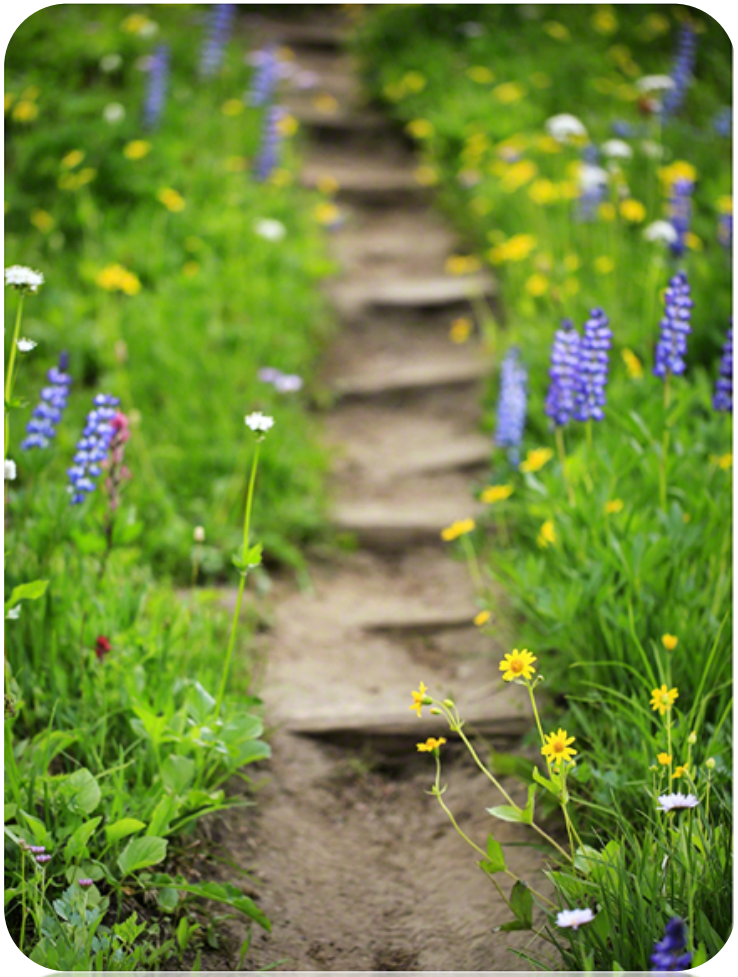
Source: J.Ryan, Presentation to Russell Group in Sept/2011

Key Points – Academic Staff

- Increased support services for IS but **little change in teaching and learning approaches**
- **Misconceptions about IS learning needs** – rote learners, lack critical thinking skills, prone to plagiarism
- Don't consider teaching, learning and assessment factors and **role of previous expectations**
- May **conflate lack of language proficiency with lack of ability**
- Don't understand the **complexities of language learning**
- **Awareness of the influence of cultural and linguistic backgrounds on writing**

Source: J.Ryan, Presentation to Russell Group in Sept/2011

In relation to this last point - Kaplan's *doodles*



'A **fallacy** of some repute and some duration is the one which assumes that because a student can write an adequate essay in his native language, he can necessarily write an adequate essay in a second language.'

"The material is all here, but it **somehow seems out of focus**", or "**Lacks organisation**", or "**Lacks cohesion**".

Source: Robert B. Kaplan, 'Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education', *Language Learning*, 16 (1966), 11-25, p.13.

‘The foreign-student paper is out of focus because the foreign student is employing a **rhetoric** and a **sequence of thought** which **violate the expectations** of the native reader.’

Source: Robert B. Kaplan, ‘Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education’, *Language Learning*, 16 (1966), 11-25, p.13.

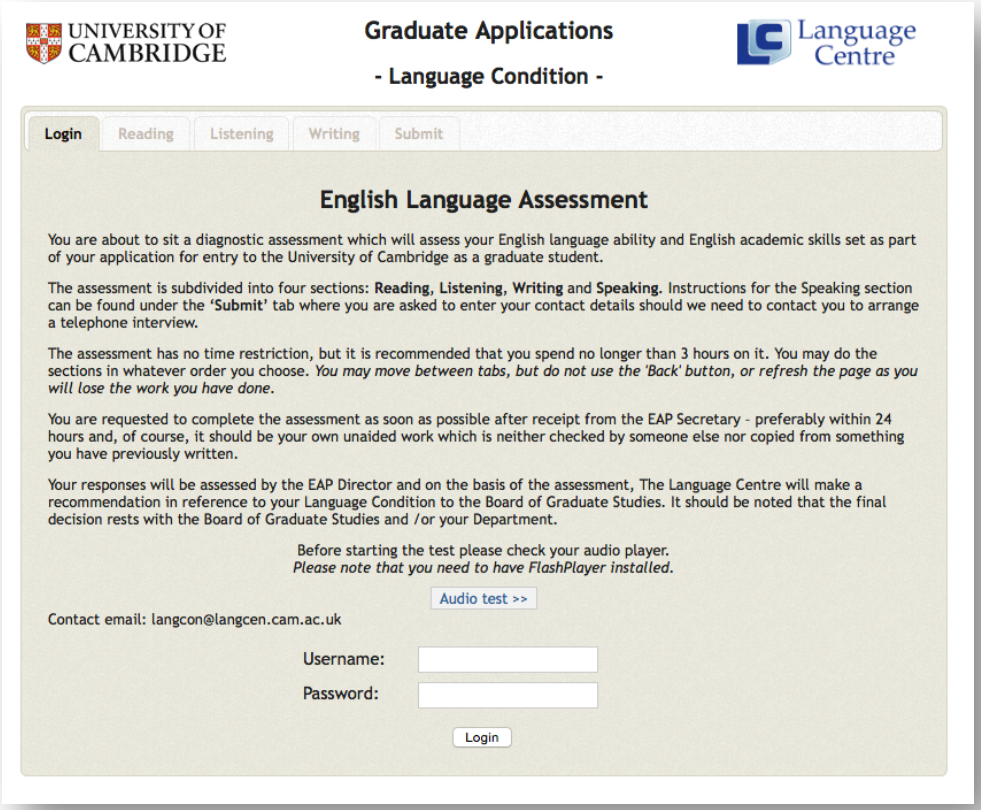
- But what are these '*expectations of the native reader*'?
- Where have they come from?
- How can an L2 student adopt them?

Note: General English

Any student who has good general English language skills necessarily has the academic English skills set required at university.

CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

What we do at Cambridge


UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Graduate Applications

- Language Condition -

Language Centre

Login | Reading | Listening | Writing | Submit

English Language Assessment

You are about to sit a diagnostic assessment which will assess your English language ability and English academic skills set as part of your application for entry to the University of Cambridge as a graduate student.

The assessment is subdivided into four sections: **Reading**, **Listening**, **Writing** and **Speaking**. Instructions for the Speaking section can be found under the **'Submit'** tab where you are asked to enter your contact details should we need to contact you to arrange a telephone interview.

The assessment has no time restriction, but it is recommended that you spend no longer than 3 hours on it. You may do the sections in whatever order you choose. *You may move between tabs, but do not use the 'Back' button, or refresh the page as you will lose the work you have done.*

You are requested to complete the assessment as soon as possible after receipt from the EAP Secretary - preferably within 24 hours and, of course, it should be your own unaided work which is neither checked by someone else nor copied from something you have previously written.

Your responses will be assessed by the EAP Director and on the basis of the assessment, The Language Centre will make a recommendation in reference to your Language Condition to the Board of Graduate Studies. It should be noted that the final decision rests with the Board of Graduate Studies and /or your Department.

Before starting the test please check your audio player.
Please note that you need to have FlashPlayer installed.

Audio test >>

Contact email: langcon@langcen.cam.ac.uk

Username:

Password:

Login

- **Postgraduate Entry**
- Visiting Students
- Medical Electives
- ERASMUS
- ICE MSt
- ICE Dip/Cert
- ICE ISS

[ca. 1500 per annum]

The Cambridge Assessment

General Academic English Ability

Discipline-specific Academic English Ability

Core Academic Skills

(e.g. Critical Thinking / Analysis / Synthesis / Reflection)

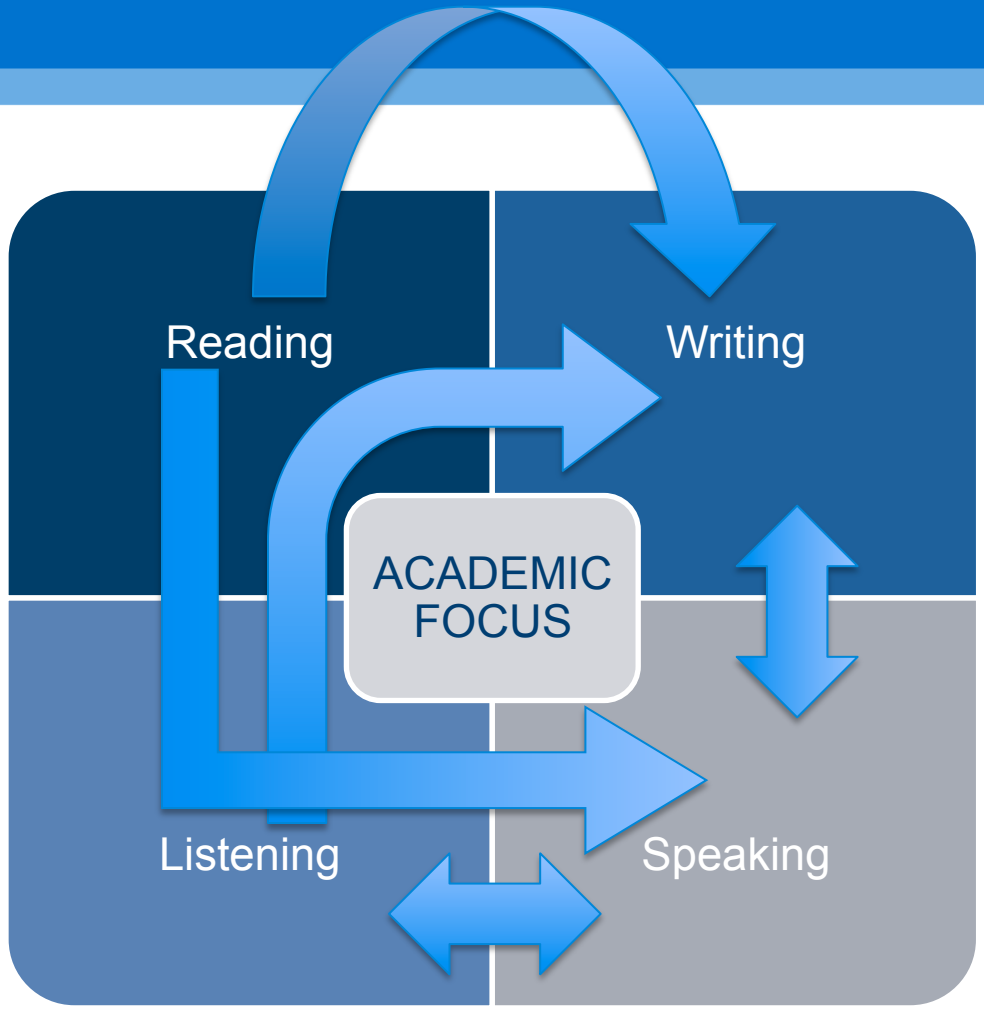
Academic Objectivity

Core Language Accuracy and Fluency within an academic environment

Structure

INPUT: Two academic articles on critical thinking to act as the basis for a written response.

INPUT: Extract from a Cambridge lecture which they have to summarise in writing.



INTEGRATED

An overview of their proposed research & a section of informal academic writing to be written more objectively, plus a self-assessment

Their research; their motivations for choosing the MPhil course; any experiences overseas; any other questions that may come up.

Assessment

There is **no specific score** that the applicants are expected to achieve.

This is **because there are no right or wrong answers** to the assessment.

Assessment Criteria

ONLINE

- Understanding of Written and Spoken Academic Input Material
- Clarity of Expression
- Fluency
- Accuracy
- Coherence and Cohesion
- Register
- Lexical and Grammatical Range and Ability
- Awareness of Academic Conventions

TELEPHONE

- Ability to discuss own research area and related questions
- Ability to discuss non-academic topics
- Ability to react to both formal and informal questions
- Fluency
- Accuracy
- Intonation
- Pronunciation
- Lexical and Grammatical Range and Ability

And…

- Any previous English language proficiency test scores and the dates taken
- Previous English language experience
- Degree for which they have applied – i.e. one-year Master's or PhD

Rationale

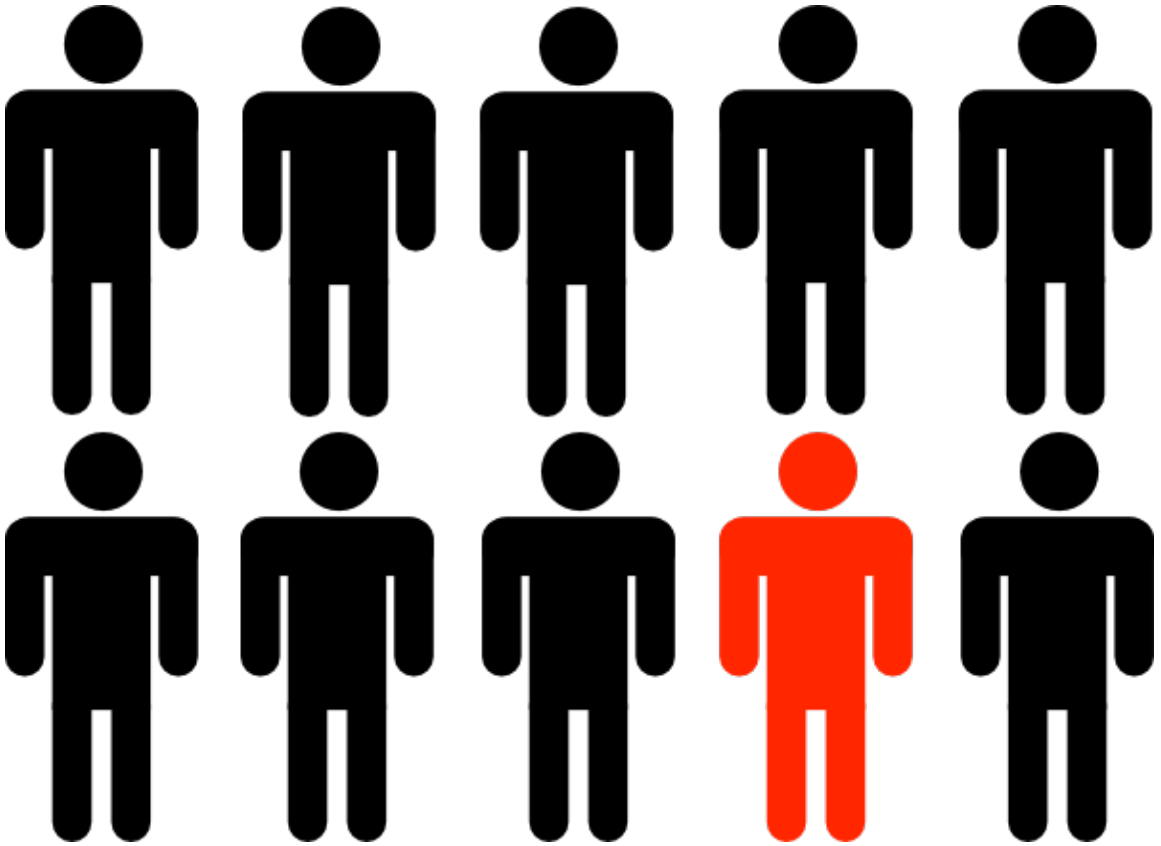
At this level, we are not looking to assess **basic language competency**, as this should already be present. The format and focus of our assessment is designed to give an indication of an applicant's **academic English ability – and therefore it covers much more than language**.

An applicant may have excellent general English ability, but it does not necessarily follow that they have the **necessary academic skills** set to do PG study/research at Cambridge.

This is what our assessment is intended to give an indication of.

Our interest for PG entry

Why?



PARADIGM SHIFT

So, UoCLC and ATS…

Test of Academic Literacy

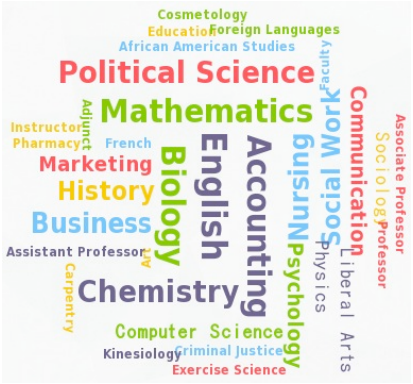
Admissions Testing Service

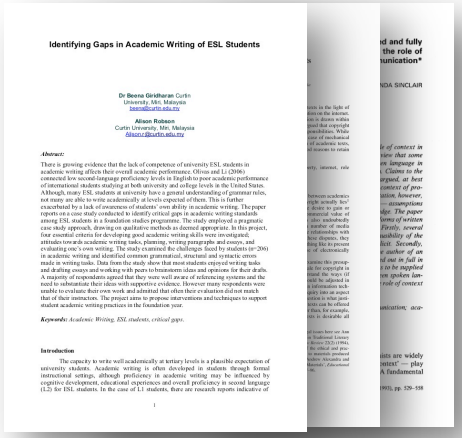
Measuring Potential

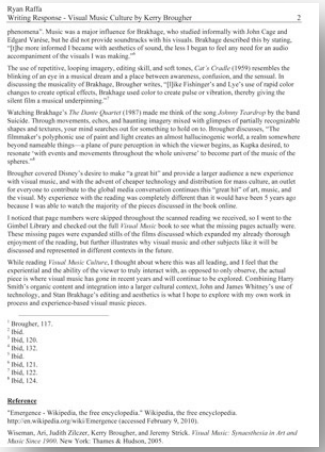
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Language Centre

What might it look like?




Identifying Gaps in Academic Writing of ESL Students


Ryan Raffa
Writing Response - Visual Music Culture by Kerry Brougher

Broadly discipline-specific

2-3 input texts

Longer written responses

Reflective Awareness of the Process

Editing Process

…with a focus on:

Integrated Tasks …

What could it be used for?

SPECIFIC

EMI

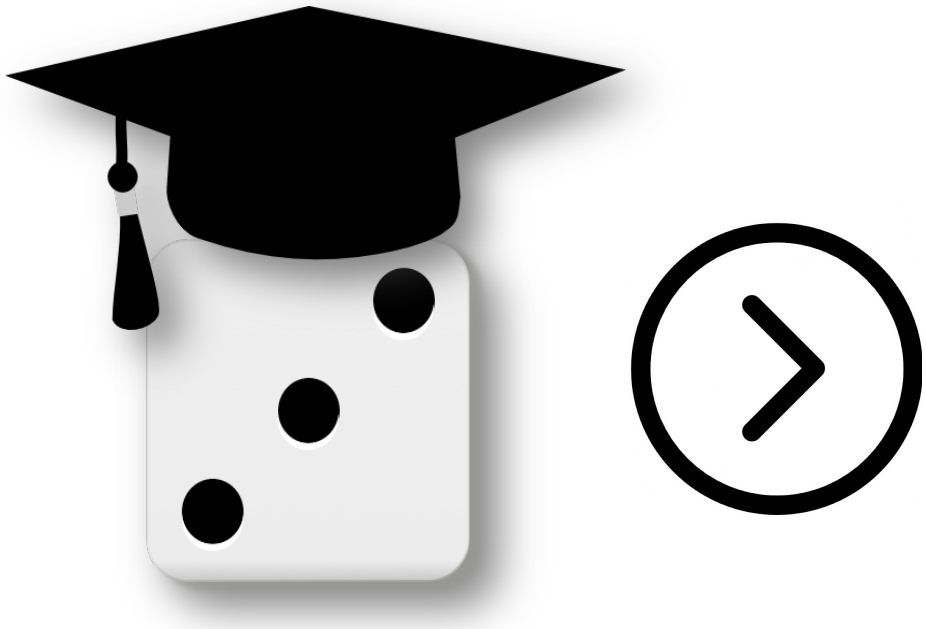
Direct Entry

As an Exit Test

Integrated into EMI courses

Part of the preparation for study at UK HEIs

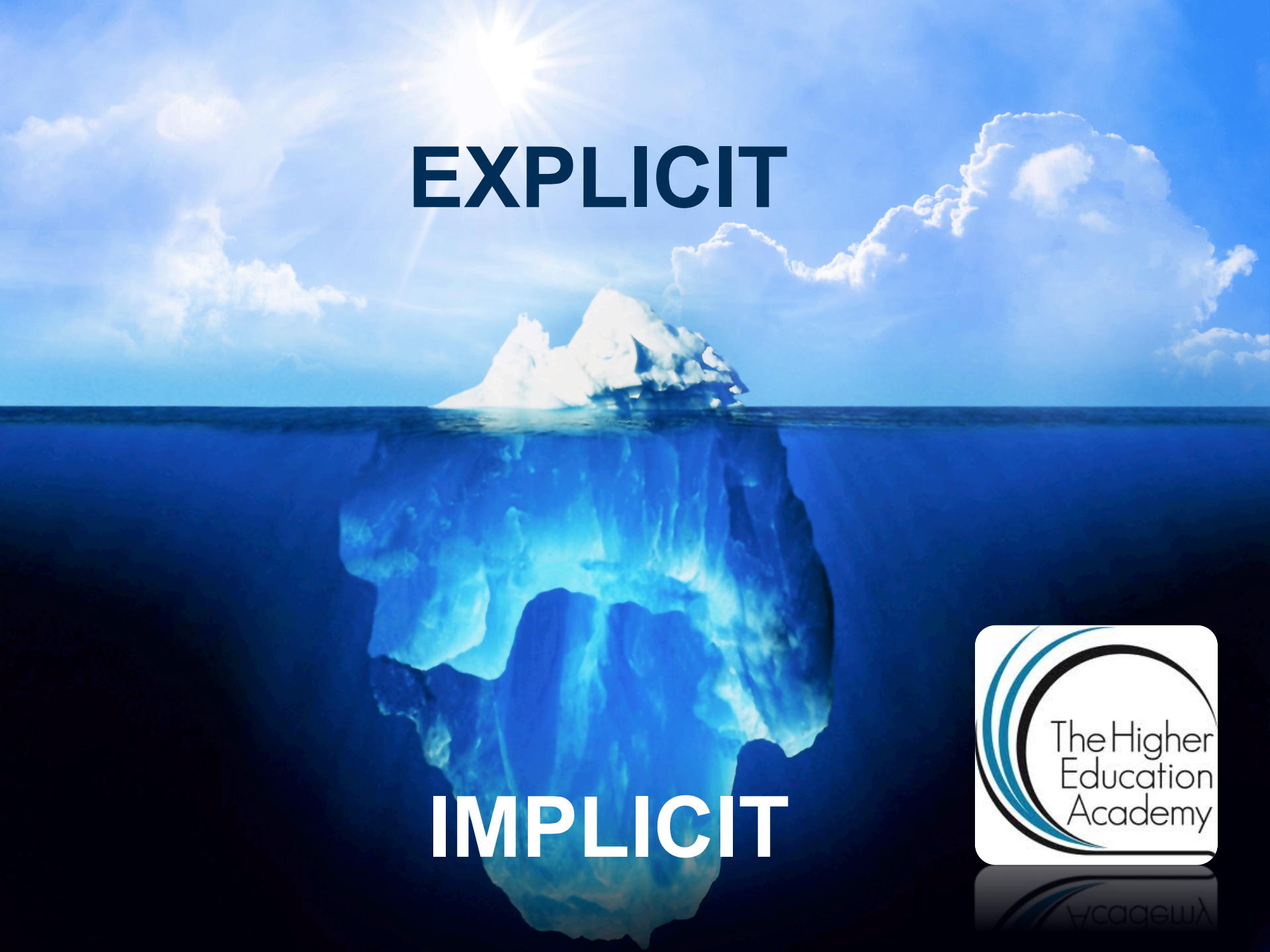
Less '*proficiency*' more 'preparatory'



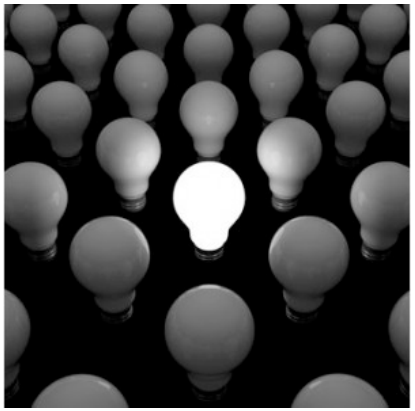
3-hr high stakes litmus test

The Washback Effect

Let’s unpack the box…


EXPLICIT
IMPLICIT
The Higher Education Academy

Position of EAP within the University



EAP Best Practice across the Wider University

Better prepared for Study at UK HEIs

Support is embedded

Examples:

Academic
Development & Training
for International Students

Interested in getting involved?

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Thank you for your attention.

And if you're interested in getting involved, do get in touch:

ko201@cam.ac.uk
01223 335004

Academic
Development & Training
for International Students

ANY
QUESTIONS
?