8 A SLOW (R)EVOLUTION: DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE EGAP COURSE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Course development is a complex business, requiring an understanding of the needs of stakeholders and developing learning outcomes, assessment tools and course materials to try to meet those needs. In the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context, there are multiple stakeholders, including teachers, students, programme directors, faculty, the university itself and the wider community. Although there may be many stakeholders, there is an advantage in that the aims of an EAP course can usually be quite clearly defined. Broadly speaking, the overarching aim of an EAP course is to equip students with the language and academic skills they need to succeed in their tertiary studies.

While the aims of an EAP course may be quite stable, the means by which those aims are met are various. EAP courses may take an integrated skills approach or may focus on particular skills, for example, a listening course to enable students to follow lectures and seminars or a lab report writing course. There may be a greater emphasis on language skills or on academic skills. Materials could be sourced from a published course book or take the form of in-house materials. Further complications arise depending on the precise nature of the EAP course – it may be pre-sessional or in-sessional, mixed-discipline or discipline specific, namely English for Specific Purposes (ESAP). All of these factors affect the kind of course which is required and developed.

This article will discuss an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) course developed in the University of Macau (UM), from its first conception in the summer of 2014 through to the latest iteration piloted in the first semester of the academic year (AY) 2016-17. We will demonstrate how the implementation of Backward Design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) can lend itself to the EAP sphere and will focus on the evolution of the course from year-to-year. We will highlight how a course is not a fixed artefact, but rather an ongoing process, involving the identification of strengths, weaknesses and emergent outcomes that could be incorporated into later iterations of the course. This adaptive approach has led to a course with a high level of sustainability, by which we mean it has flexibility and longevity. It will be able to run with subsequent cohorts with revisions but without major redesign.

2. THE TEACHING CONTEXT

The University of Macau is the largest university in the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) in the southeast of China. The university runs General Education (GE) de-

gree programmes, where students take a variety of credit bearing courses, not all of which are directly related to their main area of study. The purpose of the GE programme is to give students a well-rounded education and prepare them to deal with "complexity, diversity and change" (University of Macau, 2016). The GE programme offers courses in four broad areas, which are Language & Communication, Science & Information Technology, Society & Culture and Self-Development.

UM is a mostly English-medium instruction (EMI) institution and its homepage states that "English is the main medium of instruction, with some programmes being taught in Chinese, Portuguese or Japanese" (University of Macau, 2016, para.2). The university does not offer a foundation programme and students who enter the university start their degree courses immediately, whatever their English language level.

This places English as a key language that students will need to succeed in their studies. However, English language courses are not core subjects but are offered within the GE programme. GE courses need to be completed before graduation which meant that, in some rare cases, students could be taking an English course to fulfil their GE requirement in their final year. This was very much the exception, with the vast majority of students choosing to take the required English courses early in their UM careers.

An external examination such as IELTS or TOEFL is not used to determine students' language levels, but students entering the university take an in-house English language placement test called the E101 Test. In the AY 2014-15, students were placed into one of six levels (Level 0 to Level 5). The English Language Centre (ELC) was responsible for delivering Levels 0-4 with the highest level students taking a course offered by the English Department. An annual intake is approximately 1,500 students and of those, one third is usually placed in Levels 0-1 (approximately A1-A2 in the CEFR), one third in Level 2 (estimated at B1 in the CEFR) and the final third in the higher levels (B2 and higher).

Each level consisted of a two-semester course, with three hours per week (40.5 hours per semester, 81 hours total for the academic year). The exception to this was Level 0, in which students had six hours per week (162 hours total for the academic year) and transitioned directly into Level 2 the following year. Level 2 is the qualifying English course for non-native English speaker (NNES) students at UM and the level students must pass to meet the English language requirement of the university. Students placed into Level 2 ranged in ability from low intermediate to high intermediate and it was a vital course as it may represent the last or only language and academic skills course the students take at UM.

During the AY 2015-16, a university wide review of the General Education programme was undertaken and one of the determinations was that the amount of English training needed to be increased. Changes to the English language provision are outlined below (see Figure 1).

Old GE (up to AY 2015-16)		
Level 0	Language focus	6 hours per week x 2 semesters
Level 1	Language focus	3 hours per week x 2 semesters
Level 2	Academic skills focus	3 hours per week x 2 semesters
Level 3-5	Academic skills focus	3 hours per week x 2 semesters

New GE (AY 2016-17 onwards)		
Interactive English 1 (IE1)	Language focus	6 hours per week x 1 semester
Interactive English 2 (IE2)	Language focus	6 hours per week x 1 semester
Academic English (AE)	Academic skills focus	3 hours per week x 1 semester

Figure 1. Changes to the GE programme

Although there is only a modest increase in students' English training time, students now have to complete their English course requirements in their first or second year at UM. The new programme also creates a clearer progression for students from course to course. The focus of Interactive English 1 (IE1) is on confidence building and activation of students' existing language ability, particularly with respect to listening and speaking. The focus of Interactive English 2 (IE2) is on the development of vocabulary, with a particular focus on academic vocabulary and writing at the sentence and paragraph level. The Academic English (AE) course takes over the role of the old Level 2 course and beyond in terms of preparing students for EMI study in terms of academic skills and is the course that this article focuses on.

3. INITIAL DRIVERS FOR CURRICULAR CHANGE

The Level 2 course previous to the AY 2014-15 was based on various iterations of past courses and there was a large bank of eclectic materials on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Moodle. These materials had been developed by different tutors over time, each geared towards the particular direction of the ELC at that time. A topic-based syllabus was run in the AY 2013-14, with some of the materials compiled into a booklet. One issue with such an approach is that the course had lost an element of focus, particularly in terms of having a coherent set of materials prepared to meet specific aims. In part, the course had fallen prey to the first of what Wiggins and McTighe (2005, p. 16) refer to as "the twin sins of traditional design". This "sin" is activity-oriented planning (the second being "coverage" or covering a textbook). Activity-oriented planning occurs in curricula and courses when classroom activities are first planned without having learning aims in mind. While the activities might be engaging or fun, they may not actually lead to learning or are "hands-on without being minds-on" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 16). An example of

this type of design could be seen in an assignment which required students to make a video. While this was a valid assessment, one of the grading criteria was for creative elements, such as costumes or props, which was not particularly appropriate in an EAP course. In November 2013, an external review of the English Language Centre (ELC) was carried out by three renowned professors in EAP and a recommendation was made regarding the curriculum. The external reviewers suggested moving to more of a genre and skills-based approach and this was accepted by the ELC. Two new Head Teachers (the authors) were appointed to implement the change for Level 2.

4. APPROACHES TO COURSE DESIGN

Developing a course can be a daunting task and one of the first considerations is deciding which approach to take. Richards (2013) discusses various approaches to curriculum development in language teaching, discussing Forward, Central and Backward Design, each of which impact how a course is put together. In addition to these, there are other approaches to course design, including the text-driven approach (Tomlinson, 2005), a learner-centred approach (Nunan, 1988) and task-based syllabus design (Long & Crookes, 1992) to name but a few.

The decision as to which approach is more appropriate is affected by the type of course in question. Forward Design emphasises content as the first stage in course design and outcomes are given a relatively low priority (see Figure 2). This approach may be more suitable to conversation or general EFL courses with very broad aims, such as improving proficiency. A text-driven approach would be an example of this, where the intention is to begin by finding potentially engaging texts and, once the text has been sourced, identifying possible teaching points and learning outcomes.

Figure 2. The Forward Design Process (Richards, 2013, p. 8)

In contrast, Central Design prioritises a particular teaching technique or method as the first consideration in course design, with a task based approach being an example of this (see Figure 3).

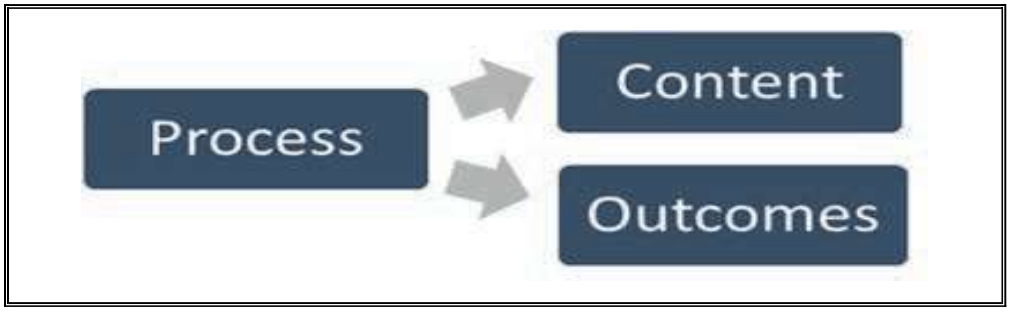

Figure 3. The central design process (Richards, 2013, p. 8)

For this redesign, no particular methodology was recommended since we are in what Kumaravadivelu (2001) would call the post-methods era and as proponents of informed "eclecticism" (Akbari, 2008, p.642), the Head Teachers believed that fellow teachers at the ELC are qualified and experienced enough to put into practice their methodology or methodologies of choice to meet the course outcomes if supported by quality teaching and learning materials. Furthermore, as with Forward Design, outcomes play a relatively unimportant role or are very general in Central Design. However, one of the key features of an EAP course is that it is goal-driven (Alexander, Argent, & Spencer, 2008), meaning it tends to have highly focused aims, and consequently an approach which prioritised explicit aims was preferred. Given the lack of focus in the previous version of the Level 2 course, it was also felt that re-clarifying the desired outcomes of the course was an essential first step.

As such, Backward Design (also known as Understanding by Design) as outlined by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) was the favoured approach. As the name suggests, a Backward Design approach begins with examining what the end-point of a course will be. It consists of a three-stage process (see Figure 4).

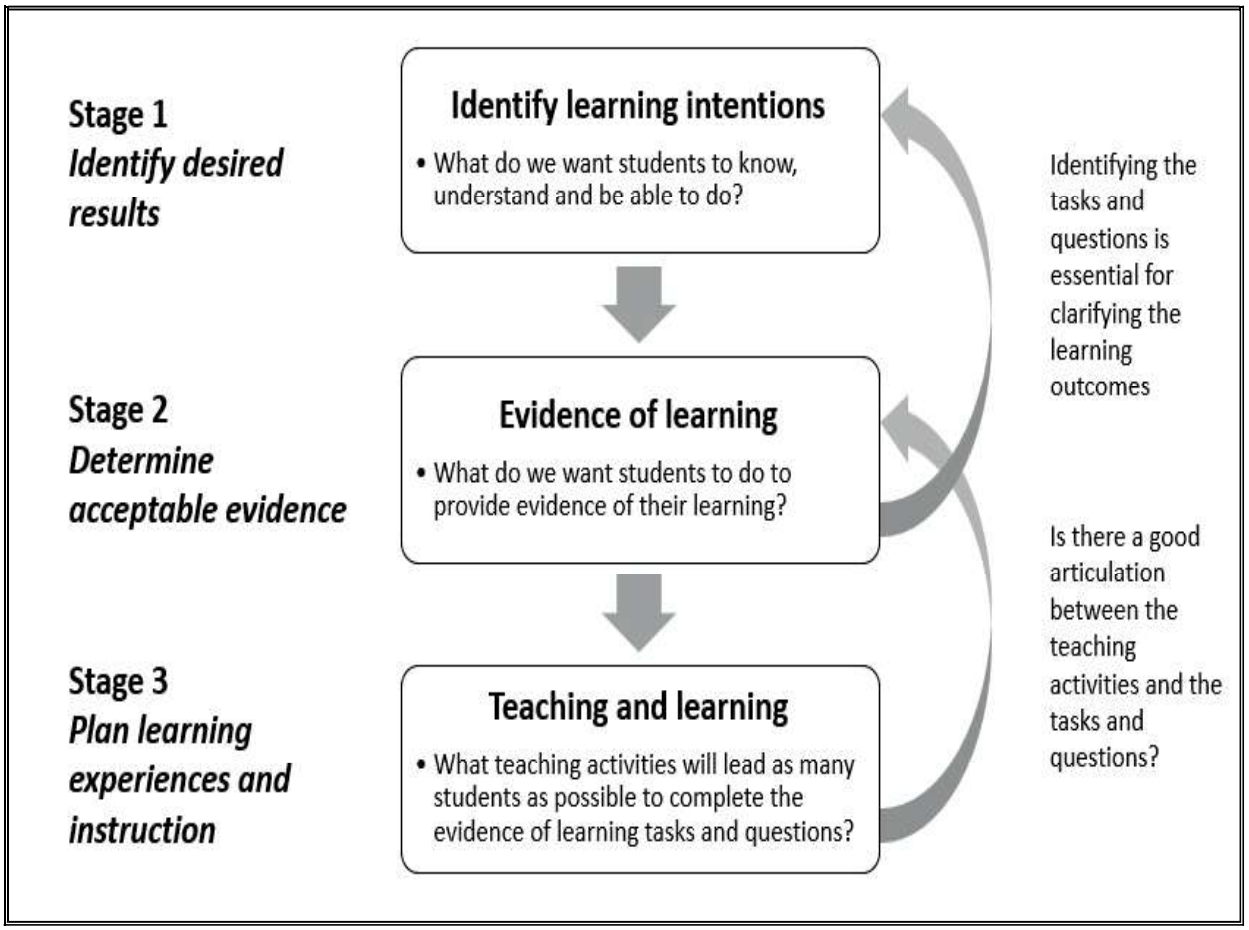

Figure 4. Backward design (after Wiggins & McTighe, as cited in Whitehouse (2014, p. 100))

Although these are described as three sequential stages, course development is an iterative process, as Whitehouse (2014) rightly points out, wherein progress in one stage impacts on the development of another. As will be demonstrated in this article, decisions about an assignment led to changes in both the learning outcomes and teaching materials.

4.1 STAGE 1 – IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS

Hyland (2006, p.1) defines EAP as "teaching English with the aim of assisting learners' study or research in that language" and the first stage in the process of developing an EAP course using Backward Design involves articulating what Wiggins and McTighe identify as the "big ideas" (2005, p. 5). The big idea is the focal point of the course and it was felt that "the big idea" for Level 2 was that the students would move away from the typical discourse of secondary school and become more enculturated in tertiary level education by means of developing their general academic literacy. By typical discourse of secondary school we are referring to the "unacademic" features that tended to be prevalent in novice student writing. Novice student writing in UM tends to be highly personalised and subjective, making extensive use of questions and exclamations, with no real basis in evidence or fact. There also tends to be an over-reliance on clichéd expressions ("as we all know", "every coin has two sides") and personal opinion/experience. Academic literacy refers to, but is not limited to, the skills that students need in order to produce written and oral work which has been informed by what they have read, listened to and/or discussed. This moves the course beyond language proficiency and into wider skills development. Indeed, it takes the language that students know and focuses on how that language can be used appropriately in a variety of academic situations.

With limited contact time of under three hours per week and mixed-discipline classes taught by the ELC, there was no opportunity and no real need to develop an ESAP (English for Specific Academic Purposes) course so an EGAP approach was preferred. With this being the case, comprehensive genre analysis was not undertaken, as it is more favoured in ESAP courses (Hyland, 2006). In addition, de Chazal (2012, p.146) neatly summarises the situation in which many EMI universities find themselves: "Pre-sessional courses, together with most foundation, preparatory, and lower-level courses are likely to work best following an EGAP approach". As such, students need to be aware of the basic conventions of academic discourse before moving into any kind of specialisation.

This understanding of EGAP meant the overall "big idea" was to help learners to develop "the language and associated practices that people need in order to undertake study or work in English medium higher education" (Gillett, 2015, para. 1). All subsequent outcomes, assessment and course materials were developed to help achieve this "linchpin idea" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 339).

4.1.1 DEVELOPING SPECIFIC COURSE OUTCOMES

Once the "big idea" for the course was established, more concrete detailed outcomes needed to be identified. There were pre-existing outcomes for the Level 2 course that were already established and part of a course outline document. As the process of changing these was potentially time-consuming (with any changes needing to be ratified by the University Senate), it was felt that they could remain unchanged for the purpose of the pilot year since they were quite generic and wide-ranging.

While it was not ideal to work around pre-existing outcomes, they were not at odds with the big idea for the course and did not set any limitations in terms of course coverage.

One benefit of knowing the outcomes were not articulated as specifically as would be desirable was an awareness that they would have to change in the next iteration of the course. This encouraged close observation of the materials and students to see how the course actually worked in process, which led to the discovery of emergent benefits and unintended learning outcomes. For example, collaboration has become a key component of the course and aspects of collaboration are now explicit outcomes when this was not the case in the first iteration of the course.

With a view to folding best practice into the course, the BALEAP Can Do Framework for syllabus design and the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) also informed the revision of the course aims (BALEAP, 2013; Council of Europe, 2014). The BALEAP framework in particular helped to identify EAP specific areas for outcomes, such as critical thinking, which may not be a feature of more general language courses. In 2016, UM also moved to implement Outcome-Based Teaching & Learning (OBTL) in the form of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for the new GE programme. Therefore, the outcomes were written in accordance with the guidelines from the Learning Institute in Queen Mary University of London (2014), which emphasise the relationship between clearly articulated learning outcomes and assessment. These guidelines also influenced decisions of how the outcomes were written in the course outline document. For example, the Learning Institute warns against writing outcomes that may be difficult to measure, that is, "students will understand …" and are more in favour of having outcomes that describe what students will be able to do in order to demonstrate understanding (Queen Mary University of London, 2014).

With the change to the new GE curriculum for the AY 2016-17 these revised aims were able to be formalised as part of the course. The overarching aims of the course became:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- express themselves appropriately in both written and oral academic discourse
- organize and apply research strategies to find and evaluate sources to use for academic purposes
- apply critical thinking to analyse oral and written texts and develop academically sound arguments
- demonstrate collaborative skills in multidisciplinary groups
- develop associated academic practices and soft skills, such as goal-setting, self-reflection and time management

These were further clarified as Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

Academic Discourse

- give a presentation on a familiar topic, and answer predictable or factual questions.
- explain objective and coherent academically sound arguments
- organise external sources to support written and oral arguments
- apply referencing and citation conventions using APA format

Academic Language

- differentiate between general meaning and more specific meaning in academic contexts
- use conventions of academic writing including noun phrases (nominalisation), objective and hedging language
- identify purpose of discourse markers in texts
- incorporate discourse markers into texts
- organise ideas coherently and connect ideas fluently with the aid of cohesive devices

Knowledge Building

- apply research strategies for finding sources
- evaluate the academic appropriacy of a source
- review texts for relevant information and relate main point of text
- employ reading strategies to deal with authentic and semi-authentic texts
- apply critical thinking to analyse a text
- make simple notes that will be of reasonable use for essay or revision purposes

Collaboration

- apply strategies for working in a group effectively
- use online tools to support group project development
- engage in collaborative written and presentation projects
- review peer work & relate feedback to peers
- evaluate perspectives from other disciplines

Associated Practices and Soft Skills

- identify personal learning objectives
- interpret the expectations of a project or assignment
- assess own behaviour to modify future practice
- use strategies to manage time effectively

Although these outcomes are a much better representation of the intent of the course, the experience from the pilot and subsequent year means that these are not seen as a fixed artefact. While there needs to be some stability in any course and there will not be significant change in the near- to mid-term, there does need to be a level of flexibility to recognise and subsequently formalise other incidental learning.

4.2 STAGE 2 – DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

The next stage in Backward Design, once the desired results have been identified, is determining what evidence illustrates those results have been met. As the aim of the course was to improve academic literacy it was felt the two best tools to assess this were the essay and oral presentation. As the University of Leicester (2016) outlines on its website, essays require students to understand a question and research that question to find evidence to support a well-constructed argument which leads to a sound conclusion. Oral presentations also pose a significant academic challenge to students, with lecturers expecting the same level of academic credibility from an oral presentation as in a written essay (Levrai & Bolster, 2015).

However, in the way that there were pre-existing outcomes for the Level 2 course there was also an assessment framework in place from the previous year. Given there was going to be significant change in terms of teaching material and course focus, it was decided that any changes to assessments would need to be introduced incrementally rather than overwhelming teachers with too many changes at once.

The assessments that were in place were quite typical of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes for non-native English speakers (NNES) students in English-speaking countries such as the UK and New Zealand (Wrigley & Acomat, 2015; Cotterall & Cohen, 2003) as well as in EMI universities in non-English-speaking states like Japan and Hong Kong (Mulligan & Garofalo, 2011; Bruce & Hamp-Lyons, 2015). However, for the purpose of the AY 2014-15, some changes were made and Figure 5 below shows the pre-existing assessment tools and the revisions introduced in the AY 2014-15.

Pre-2014 Existing Assessment Tools	Assessment Tools for AY 2014-15
A short individual essay	A group essay
A graded discussion	A group discussion
A group presentation	A group presentation
A reading & writing test	A listening test
A listening test	Coursework
Independent Learning & Coursework	Independent Learning
'Cultural awareness' video	

Figure 5. Assessment tools differences

The aim of the assessments was to ensure that students would get multiple opportunities to demonstrate their academic literacy, with items such as referring to sources running through all the productive assessments. This focus on academic literacy ensures that the assessment tools measure the course outcomes and reinforce the "big idea", that is, aiding students to engage in academic discourse.

An important decision regarding the essay and presentation assignments was that they were both collaborative tasks. Although group presentations had been a feature of previous ELC assessments, group essays were a new innovation at the ELC. Scotland (2014) identifies three main reasons why collaborative projects are becoming more widely employed in

higher education but in our case, the rationale for introducing collaborative writing was two-fold. As part of getting students used to academic discourse, a process writing approach was preferred. This meant that during the development of the essay, the students were expected to produce a portfolio, including notes on their reading, an essay outline, a first draft, second draft and final draft. With 24 students per class and five classes per teacher this could very quickly become an unmanageable workload. However, if students worked in groups of three this would allow for a longer, more in-depth piece of work where the teacher could realistically give constructive feedback on each element of the portfolio. More importantly, a group essay task provided opportunity for collaboration between students which could have additional learning benefits beyond essay writing. As discussed in Mulligan and Garofalo (2011), Storch (2005) and Shin (2015) there are many benefits to collaborative writing, including better task achievement, increased critical thinking and high levels of language complexity and accuracy.

Although group essay projects were new, the initial structure put in place for the assignment worked adequately but there was certainly room for improvement and this provides an illustration of course design as an ongoing process of development, use, review, revision, reuse and refinement. The move to collaborative writing demonstrates how the different stages of Backward Design feed into each other and that it is not a simple linear process from one stage to another, illustrating Whitehouse's (2014) description of Backward Design as an iterative process. Introducing a collaborative assessment (Stage 2) directly led to the articulation of new course outcomes (Stage 1) about collaboration as the additional potential learning benefits of group writing were recognised. It further led to the development of additional teaching materials and use of different online tools to help scaffold students through the group essay process (Stage 3). Furthermore, the assessment tool itself was refined after use and the changes are outlined below.

The revision of the essay portfolio can be seen in Figure 6 below which shows a comparison of the original portfolio required in the AY 2014-15 and the revised framework for the AY 2016-17.

In the first iteration of the group essay assessment tasks, students had to submit individual work on their response to essay input texts and write a paragraph of the essay individually after the group had decided the outline together. The intention of this was to have a balance between group and individual marks to try to mitigate some of the potential concerns about the fairness of group grading by having clearly defined individual elements (Nepal, 2012). It was also an attempt to pre-emptively address the issue of what Maiden and Perry refer to as "free-riders" (2011, p. 452), students who do not contribute significantly to the group project but benefit from the work of others. Although obvious in retrospect, having individual writing elements in a group essay task meant that students tended to adopt the strategy of solely focusing on "their part" of the essay, leading to repetitive, poorly constructed first drafts. It became clear that students needed more support and scaffolding as they got used to the group writing process and these elements were folded into the revised course and developing collaboration became an explicit aim of the course.

Group Essay Portfolio AY 2014-15	Group Essay Portfolio AY 2016-17
Notes on a source (individual) Outline (group) Single paragraph (individual) First Draft (group) Second Draft (group) Final Draft (group)	Group Ground Rules (group) Online Source Discussion (group) Annotated bibliography (individual) Outline (group) Outline presentation (group) First Draft (group) Groupwork 'Stop, Check, Reflect' (individual) Second Draft (group) Peer feedback (individual) Final Draft (group) Reflective Writing (individual)

Figure 6. Group essay portfolio differences

The changes to the task types also led to a change in the grading scheme and Figure 7 shows the breakdown of the grades for the essay project. There are a mix of group and individual grades and the newest grade category for the AY 2016-17 is that of "group contribution". Since the teacher will be able to look inside the group process through monitoring the group's online workspaces, such as the collaboration tools "Stormboard" and Google Docs as well as in-class tutorials and discussions with groups, it will be possible to determine how much and in what ways students are contributing to the essay project.

Essay Project AY 2016-17	% of final grade
Process: Annotated Bibliography (individual)	5%
Process: Outline Presentation (group)	Formative
Process: Peer Feedback (individual)	5%
Process: Group Contribution (individual)	5%
Process: Drafting Process (group)	5%
Product: Final draft (group)	15%

Figure 7. Essay project grade distribution

Another major development was in the way the final essay was graded. In the AY 2013-14, essays had been marked according to a tick sheet where students were awarded a mark 1-5 for different elements of the essay with 1 meaning 'needs improvement' and 5 meaning 'excellent', although no detailed descriptors were provided. The graded elements were:

- content (introduction, thesis, main argument, counter argument & conclusion);
- organisation (essay level, paragraph level);

- language (grammar, vocabulary & mechanics);
- citation.

A criteria-driven approach of grading was preferred for the AY 2014-15, with each category scored from 0-100 based on descriptions of expectations of performance in each band (A to F). The initial criteria were organised into four broad categories:

- Content - task fulfilment & referencing – 30%;
- Organisation - coherence & cohesion – 30%;
- Language Use: Grammar - range & accuracy – 20%;
- Language Use: Vocabulary - range & accuracy – 20%.

These broad categories will be quite familiar to IELTS examiners and while these were adequate, it was felt there could still be improvement to ensure the assessment tool matched the outcomes of the course. Given the big idea of helping students to develop their academic literacy, there did not seem to be sufficient recognition of student reading, paraphrasing, synthesising and referencing. As such, for the AY 2015-16 the grading criteria were refined into the following categories:

- Answering the Question – 25%
- Organisation – 25%
- Use of Sources – 25%
- Language Use – 25%

These proved a better fit to the course outcomes and will be used for future iterations of the course.

The other significant change in the assessment tools is the increased role of coursework. Rather than listening and reading being assessed in final summative tests, it was more appropriate to assess receptive skills in ongoing formative coursework assignments, with the ultimate demonstration of students' learning from their reading and listening being evidenced in their written and oral production. As will be discussed in the next section, extensive use was made of the VLE, with input texts for assignments being made available to students with accompanying comprehension quizzes and discussion forums.

4.3 STAGE 3 – PLAN LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND INSTRUCTION

The third stage in Backward Design entails selecting the actual learning activities and resources. The selection of materials and activities is made easier since the choice of materials is determined by what provides the students with the best opportunity and affordances to reach the "big idea". While commercially available integrated EAP textbooks were considered, they were found to be too large, having been designed for courses of 180 to 220 contact hours on average. These contrast sharply with the total course length available in UM (40.5 hours per semester). Another key reason why an integrated textbook was not deemed suitable for the Level 2 course was that the writing components of these books did not fit with the multiple drafting stages of the EAP writing process. Commercial integrated textbooks often include short texts and tasks about different topics in each chapter rather than explore one topic in depth throughout the course to build up to a final essay. It was

also difficult to find an integrated skills textbook which would fully support the course outcomes without significant supplementation. It was determined that a commercial listening/speaking book could provide the required structured listening practice (an area which had been somewhat lacking in the previous version of the course). The listening texts could also serve as an introduction to the topics which would be explored in more detail through the essay development and oral assignments. Consequently, the course would be a blend of in-house reading and writing materials, a published listening and note-taking textbook (Kisslinger's (2009) *Contemporary Topics 2*) and the available VLE (Moodle).

One of the intentions in the initial course design was to create a course that would be sustainable in terms of being able to run with multiple cohorts for several years without major curriculum overhaul. It was envisaged that over subsequent years, the main assignments could arise from different topics raised in the commercial listening book, so the unit that provided the topic of the listening test one year could be the topic of the discussion the following year and the essay the year after that. This approach would mean a substantial core of the material in the course booklet could stay stable, but be supplemented with different input texts made available on the VLE, depending on the particular assignment topics that year.

While conceptually it seemed as if that blend would provide flexibility, it became clear when reviewing the pilot year that the listening inputs from the published course book would require significant supplementation to give students enough supporting texts to develop the topic awareness they needed to approach an essay or presentation task. For students to be able to develop academically sound work, they needed a depth of knowledge which would come from multiple sources. In the second year, this meant that additional reading and video texts on the assignment topics were provided through Moodle, with the short lecture from the commercial book serving as the in-class topic introduction. In light of the reduced role of the commercial material and the requirement to change from a two-semester course to a one-semester course, there was an opportunity to replace the commercial materials with fully in-house materials for the AY 2016-17.

Given that an EAP course (even an EGAP one) will require students to engage with a topic in some depth, a major difficulty can be selecting an engaging topic area which will be interesting and relevant. With a view to sustainability, the topic area must be broad enough to have relevance to multidisciplinary groups and engaging enough that it can be revisited with subsequent cohorts. A broad topic area may also avoid teacher fatigue in relation to reading essays on the same topic again and again. The topics selected in the Level 2 course that arose from the commercial listening and note-taking book (e.g., Global English, Media, Public Health and Learning Styles) were topics that students could deal with but not ones which really allowed students to bring their specialities to bear and were tilted too much toward the Humanities.

Although there was an intent to change topic, this does not mean that there would be a radically different approach. One of the strengths of Backward Design is that the experience of the AY 2014-15 and the AY 2015-16 led to the establishment of a coherent set of outcomes and assessments. To prepare students to reach these outcomes, useful activity types had also been developed in the course materials. For example, through the two years of Level 2, successful tasks had been introduced to develop key aspects of academic study:

- how and when to introduce and reinforce critical thinking
- tasks to helps students understand assignment questions
- strategies for online research and evaluation of sources
- approaches to developing a thesis and outlining a response
- how to deal with tutor and peer feedback

As this framework was in place, it meant the development of materials for the AY 2016-17 was much more efficient than the AY 2014-15, when the structure of the course was conceptualised and the materials written. Once the new topic area was decided for the AY 2016-17, it was a case of finding suitable input texts and re-contextualising existing activities, for example, reading for specific information around the new content.

The revised one-semester Academic English course developed for the AY 2016-17 is based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDGs). The SDGs were agreed in 2016 and set out seventeen goals for a fairer, cleaner future. The goals include:

1. No Poverty
2. Zero Hunger
3. Good Health and Well-being
4. Quality Education
5. Gender Equality
6. Clean Water & Sanitation
7. Affordable and Clean Energy
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
9. Industry, Innovation & Infrastructure
10. Reduced Inequalities
11. Sustainable Cities & Communities
12. Responsible Consumption & Production
13. Climate Action
14. Life Below Water
15. Life on Land
16. Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions
17. Partnerships for the Goals

These are wide-ranging goals that touch on key aspects of modern life and major issues like equality, climate change and sustainable development. As with the earlier iteration of the course, the core content is covered in the in-house printed course booklet, which provides an overview of the SDGs and what they hope to achieve. Further texts and videos that help develop students' topic knowledge can then be provided via the VLE. Once students have built a general awareness of the SDGs as preparation for the subsequent essay and presentation assignments, they need to research particular goals of their choosing. They can do this through choosing goals that are interesting to them or ones that are relevant to their fields of study. In the pilot of the course, certain goals (No Poverty, Decent Work & Economic Growth, Gender Equality) proved more popular but most of the seventeen goals were chosen in either students' presentations or essays. Some students also chose to focus on one specific target within a goal, adding further to the diversity of topics arising from the SDGs.

Since the goals run until 2030, every year the information available to students will be slightly different, leading to different essays and presentations. 2016, for example, proved a fertile year to examine gender equality and climate action, particularly in light of the US Presidential election. Within their own classes, teachers could direct students towards specific goals if desired. This means that the course could potentially run for successive cohorts with no radical change to the materials but with very different work being produced

by students, limiting the opportunity for peer plagiarism and keeping the topic fresh for the teacher. In the first semester's pilot, the sources found by the students were impressive and wide-ranging and documented in their annotated bibliographies. These student-found sources could be incorporated into following iterations of the course as recommended reading or a reading list and add to the sustainability of the course. Furthermore, study of the SDGs should be beneficial for the students themselves as it will raise their awareness of global issues and their role as global citizens (Reynolds, 2016). Knowledge of the goals and issues surrounding them could also lend itself to the students' disciplinary studies.

The strength of Backward Design and developing a framework of desired results, assessments and the types of tasks that can help students to achieve those outcomes is that once that framework is in place, it becomes relatively straightforward to develop materials in a new topic area. The course booklet provides an introduction to the topic of the SDGs and supports students in understanding collaboration, academic strategies and assignment development. The scope and sequence of the course can be seen in Appendix A, the course booklet table of contents. As can be seen from the course contents, there is a close alignment between the teaching materials and the course outcomes. The main input reading source texts and videos for the assignments are provided on the VLE. With this being the case, it adds to the sustainability of the course as it will be easy to change the input texts for successive cohorts without major revision of the course booklet. There are various websites from which teachers could source potential articles, from the UN SDG website itself to websites like The Conversation. This is a particularly useful resource as it provides accessible articles written by academics which can be reproduced if credited to the website. Alternatively, teachers could direct students to sources like the UK Guardian newspaper, which also has an SDG section. As previously mentioned, the students in the pilot course found some excellent sources, and each iteration can adopt new and up-to-date reports and articles about the SDGs, and hence sustain the course further. Sustainability could also come in the form projects arising from the SDGs. For instance, students could produce an SDG wiki, which could be maintained and updated by subsequent cohorts or collaborative videos documenting an SDG in the local community could also be produced.

5. CONCLUSION

The title of this article refers to a slow (r)evolution. The course for the AY 2016-17 looks radically different from the course of the AY 2013-14 and even very different to the courses of the AY 2014-15 and the AY 2015-16. However, the process of change has been gradual and the underlying architecture of the course has not changed as much as the evolving teaching materials may suggest. Developing a course takes time and is a process of planning, delivery, reflection and refinement. It is an iterative process to the extent to which it becomes difficult to see if a course can ever really be thought of as "finished". However, having an approach of regular refinement should limit the need for major re-imagining and rewriting.

Backward Design provides a distinct benefit to course designers in developing the course materials they write. A clearly conceptualised "big idea", articulated through more detailed learning outcomes, informs the development of appropriate assessment tools. Hav-

ing clearly defined targets makes the process of developing teaching and learning materials significantly easier. Once course materials have been developed, experiencing the course in action and getting feedback from colleagues quickly highlights what works well, what needs adjustment and what needs to be reconsidered entirely. Furthermore, unanticipated learning opportunities and outcomes tend to emerge when course developers teach with the learning materials they designed and these can then be incorporated into the next iteration of the course.

The UN's Sustainable Development Goals also seem to be fertile ground to explore in an EGAP course. They have the potential to engage the learners intellectually, academically and emotionally. Through study of the SDGs, students should develop the intended academic, language, and collaborative skills as well as gain a better understanding of their role as global citizens in the 21st century. The wide scope of the SDGs gives the course a high level of flexibility and adaptability, which should add to the course longevity. Making use of online platforms also means that the editing process can take place without the need to reprint materials, resulting in a sustainable course in more ways than one.

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Appendix A

Course Contents

Unit	Contents
1	Course Introduction *Welcome, Your attitude to study, Academic culture, Assessment at university, The importance of critical thinking, Independent Study, Reflective thinking and writing (Part 1), Using Moodle, Preparing for group work*
2	Building Knowledge *Topic introduction, Understanding a topic, Reading strategy I – skimming, Reading strategy II – dealing with unknown vocabulary, Reading strategy III – scanning, Reading strategy IV – questioning a text, Reading strategy V – paraphrasing, Reading strategy VI – summarising*
3	Working in Teams *What makes a good team, Starting your essay group, Writing a group essay, Steps in writing an essay, Team leadership, Group essay scenarios*
4	Understanding Assignments *Spoken and written assignments, Resources to understand academic writing, Referencing (Part 1) – references & citations, Question Analysis, Questioning assignment questions, Your essay question*

5	Researching Your Topic *Finding answers, Focussing your search, Checking reliability, Sharing your results, Referencing (Part 2) – introducing APA, Writing your annotated bibliography,*
6	Preparing to Write *Developing a thesis, Writing your thesis, Structuring an essay, Developing an outline, Presenting an outline*
7	Writing at University *Academic Style, Referencing (Part 3) – academic integrity*
8	Starting to Write *A Working Introduction, Effective paragraphs, Connecting paragraphs: transitions, Conclusions, First draft submission, Reflective thinking and writing (Part 2) – stop, check, reflect*
9	Editing *The value of editing, The need for feedback, Second draft submission, Referencing (Part 4) – formatting your reference list, No-one writes alone, Second draft feedback, Other features you should improve in the second draft*
10	Presentation Project *Your presentation group, Your presentation topic, Referencing (Part 5) – using sources in your presentation Presentations take time, Rehearsing a presentation*
11	Finishing an essay *Finishing touches, Ways of proofreading, Proofreading checklist, Online tools*
12	End of course reflection *Reflective thinking and writing (Part 3), What is reflective writing? Guiding Questions, Useful language for reflection*