

**‘Embedded with the troops’.
Teaching academic writing from
within subject modules: a short-lived
luxury or the way forward?**

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The Image

Access
and being
'in on the
action'



Limitations of
being
'embedded'

A premonition?



No funding for the course next year...

So, a 'short-lived luxury'?

'the fragility of ESP initiatives' (Swales et al. 2001, p455)

Outline

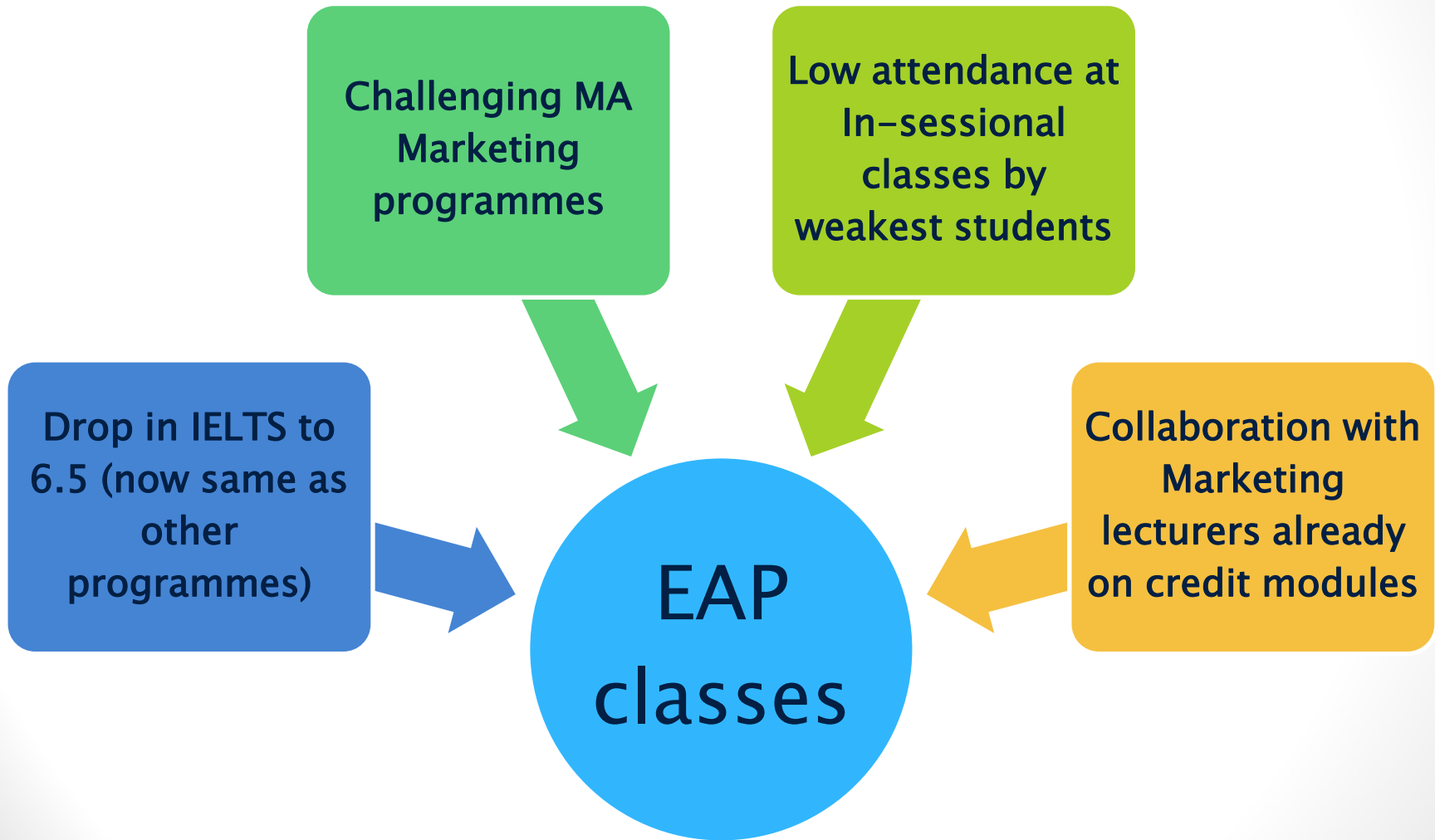
The course: the immediate context; planned strategies to maximise effectiveness

Constraints and limitations

Feedback and reflection

The wider context and the case for ESAP

The immediate context



Other types of EAP course

Within the academic year:

- General 'open' In-sessional EAP classes
- 'Faculty-specific' In-sessional classes e.g. PG business students academic writing =

Elements of CEM (contextualisation, embedded, mapping: Sloan and Porter 2010, p203), already:

Embedded:

- On students' timetables
- Presence at induction & diagnostic testing
- Cooperation with staff

Contextualised:

- Specific to business: topics / 'genres' / sample writing

- Credit-bearing ESAP modules = all CEM elements incl. 'mapping' against student assignments

'Embedded' courses?

Use term '**embedded**' for 'special, commissioned' courses for particular programme cohorts e.g.

For PG design



For UG computing



For UG politics



For PG science (Dissertation)



For UG Social Work



Embedded...

Constraints

The diagram consists of two overlapping blue arrows. The left arrow points left and contains the word 'Constraints'. The right arrow points right and contains a list of three items: 'Access to students', 'Specificity', and 'Collaboration / Raised profile'. The right arrow overlaps the left one, and they are positioned against a light blue gradient background with a dark blue vertical bar on the right side.

Access to students

Specificity

Collaboration /
Raised profile

The EAP input into MA Marketing programme modules – in semester one

Aims:

- Foreground importance of academic writing for success
- Help before first assignments
- Identify the weakest students

Conflicting?

Identifying 'deficits' VERSUS
Promoting writing skills for all

EAP input – strategies to increase effectiveness

- To identify weaker students: diagnostic writing in induction week
- Within a range of modules: cover different skills
- Some input and background info on VLE
- Class time focused on **tasks**: practise skills & further identify weaker students
- Tasks use assignment reading / titles / cases as basis of activities

The classes

Global marketing management

- Week 1–3 – 55 students
- 1–1.5 hours within 3 hour class
- Navigating journal articles / literature reviews / writing the assignment

Integrated marketing communications

- Weeks 1–4 – 55 students
- 1–1.5 hours within 3 hour class
- Summarising / assignment report writing
- 2 Homework tasks – 5% marks

Which were the most successful and why??

Public Relations

- 2x2 hour class on ONE day – 30 students
- Professional PR writing genres
- Writing tasks for second class
- Assistance with writing & feedback

Marketing Strategy

- 2 x 2hr classes – week 7 & 11 – 12 students
- Assignment & exam oriented: case based assignment writing & case based exam

Match the comments

1. 'Useful and helpful... this was reflected in the overall high quality of marks they attained'

(Marketing Strategy)

2. 'Some students felt it was a waste of time'

(Global Marketing Management)

3. 'I thought it worked well and students found it useful to focus on writing skills'

(Public Relations)

4. 'They found some things useful but overall felt it took up too much time'

(Integrated Marketing Communications)

'Successes' Public Relations



- Practical writing tasks (case based):
 - Press releases / reactive Q & As / press conference statement / statement for website / statement for investors
- Realistic 'under pressure' time frame – by pm
- A dedicated professional writing skills class – one day
- My role? Assistance and feedback

'Successes'

Marketing Strategy



- Classes dedicated to a) assignment b) exam
- Very specific to case-based work and expectations of postgraduate writing
- Very specific to those 'genres'
- Use of sample questions and writing

‘Less successful’ ...



Integrated Marketing Communications

Positives:

- Raised awareness of key writing skills
- Practised key writing skills & gave individual feedback
- Used module / assignment materials

Negatives:

- Perception of ‘using up class time’
- Perception of ‘not needing it’

‘Least successful’



Global Marketing Management

Positives:

- Raised awareness of key reading and writing skills
- Used module / assignment materials for in-class tasks

Negatives:

- Some lack of understanding
- Perception of ‘using up class time’
- Perception of ‘not needing it’
- Students not done anything for assignment / not done preparation for class

Lessons learned

1. Optionality

- Give students choice to attend – L1 students
- Not taking up module time
- Not feeling rushed

2. Timing

- Not at start of course – no perception of need
- Near to assignment time

3. Focused on assignment / other useful tasks

- Specifics of assignment / specifics of useful ‘genres’

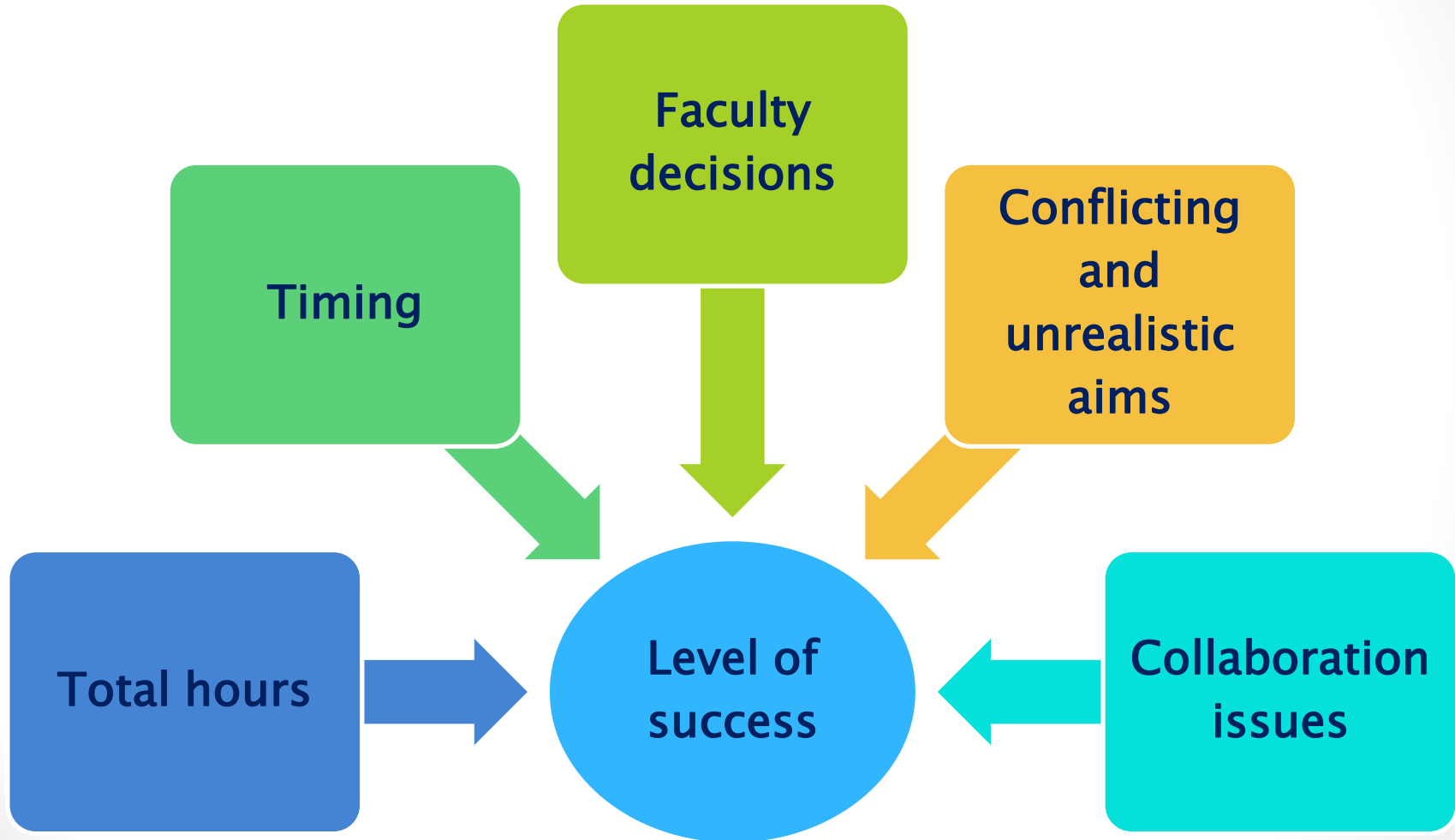
4. Collaboration

- Don't assume teachers know what you need
- Require total support throughout process
- Should be on-going, dynamic process (see Barron, 2002)

5. Focus

- Follow one module?

Constraints

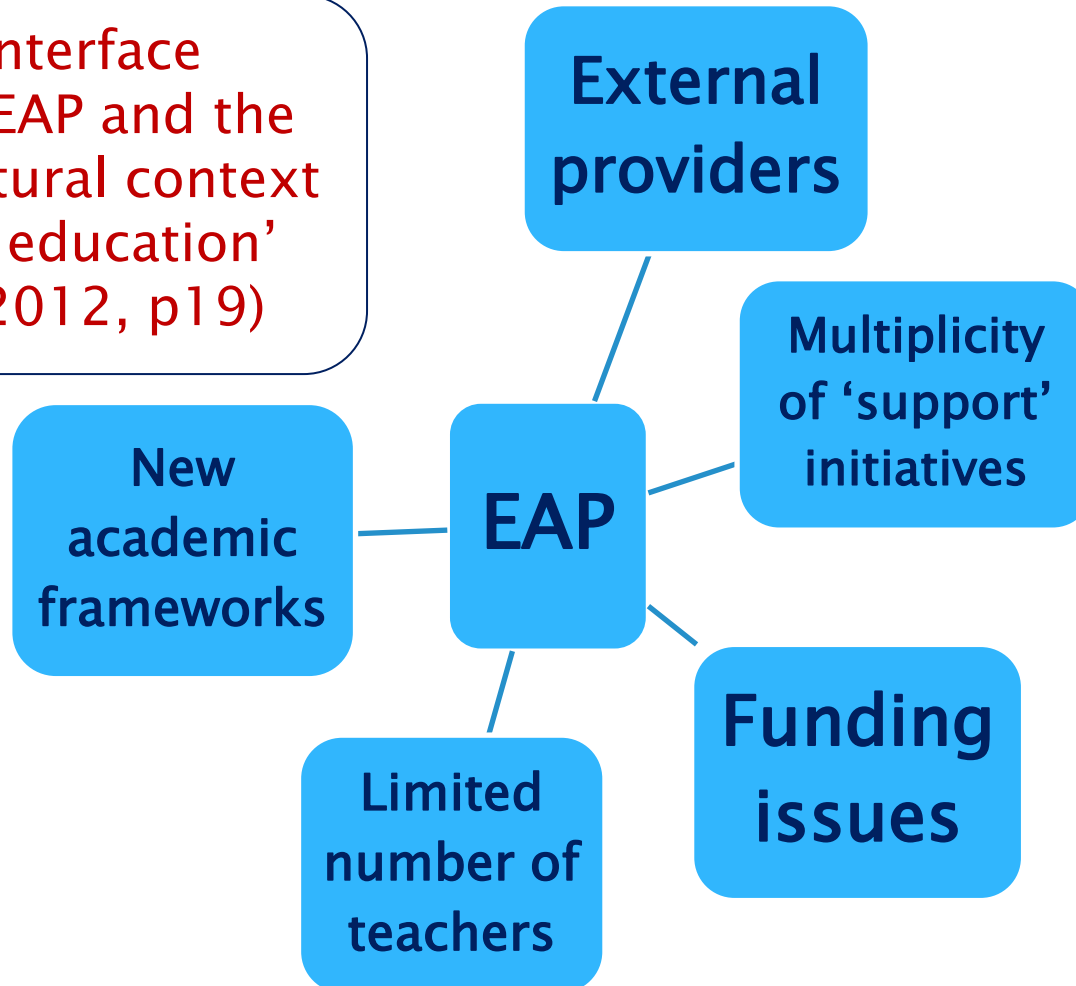


Reasons to have embedded courses

- Students' perception of relevance
- Mutual understanding
- Awareness-raising of our expertise and what offer
- Highlighting of importance of communication skills for university and work
- Vehicle to direct students towards other courses and tutorials
- Informing of future EAP courses in disciplines
- Increasing acceptance of ESAP / disciplinary variation perspective (Hyland, 2002; Nesi and Gardner, 2012; Coffin and Donohue, 2012)
- Rare to have credit-bearing ESAP modules

The wider context – argument for specificity and embedding

‘(...) the interface between EAP and the wider cultural context of higher education’ (Turner, 2012, p19)



Collaboration to establish a more equal status?



‘(...) the hierarchy needs to be disrupted and a more horizontal alignment put in place’ (Turner, 2012, p24)

But, perhaps not in way expecting:

‘Embedding academic skills in the curriculum’ (given new emphasis in university frameworks)

Subject lecturers actively teaching writing and speaking skills

**EAP teachers – what are we teaching?
Perception – just remains task of fixing the language of L2 students**

Embedding for success?

- Specific to programmes
- Demonstrating our expertise in terms of:
 - a) understanding and teaching different discourses (developed through collaboration – but not content experts: see Belcher, 2006, p140)
 - b) and our expertise in *language* as a resource for communication in a variety of contexts (Turner, 2004)

Otherwise... what differentiates us?

References

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Questions to reflect on...

1. How can we overcome the constraints?
2. How can we optimise collaboration?
3. How can we deal with the inherent tension between providing writing skills for all and helping students with their language?