



# Developing an advanced, specialized English proficiency test for Beijing universities

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the specificity conundrum:

EGP EAP ESAP ESP English in the Disciplines-

*Specialised English* [Hyland & Wong 2019]

# Abstract



As the general level of English proficiency among university undergraduates in China rises, some institutions and academic students the opportunity to take a discipline-focussed English language test in their third year. This project, sponsored by the Beijing College English Research Association, is identifying the need for specifically discipline-focused English language courses and developing a template for the assessment of achievement in those courses. The need for assessments of academic writing and speaking, skills which are less often assessed in China and are increasingly seen to be as essential to success in intra-company as in international communication, has already been identified by College English professors.



programmes, and yet, few EAP practitioners are actively involved in wider debates about what constitutes EAP assessment. In other words, the development of EAP assessment theory has been left in the hands of language testers even though it is EAP practitioners who devise and administer most of the EAP assessment going

EAP teachers have many skills, but

contributes little to theory-building or wider understandings of EAP assessment in practice. This results in the construct of EAP in EAP assessment being under-defined and under-

(Schmitt & Hamp-



## BCERA Rationale (2)



with the ultimate goal of facilitating EAP teaching and learning as

term objectives of this project are threefold:

1. to develop a test syllabus on EAP competence assessment;
2. to design a test specification accordingly; and
- 3.



# Phase 1



## PRELIMINARY NEEDS ANALYSIS

English, eight professors from 4 Beijing universities were interviewed.

Interviewers were members of the BCERA. Interviewees were academic faculty at four of

Language faculty from 18 of them. The preliminary data were collected from:

Tsinghua University (National Direct, rank #2)

University of the China Academy of Sciences (National Direct, rank #6)

Beijing Normal University (National Direct, rank #10)

University of Science and Technology Beijing (National Direct, rank #15)

The eight interviewees were from:

Civil Engineering

Computer Science

Economics

Education

Law

Materials Science

Maths

Social Science



Findings from preliminary needs  
analysis:  
ENGLISH SKILLS



More specific questions on what English skills and levels are

# Findings from preliminary needs analysis:

## DISCIPLINE-RELATED ENGLISH



The most common needs to emerge in the interviews were:

**Academic social interaction** (preparing for study year abroad, for conference attendance and presentation)

Opportunities for **interaction with native speakers**

Mastery of **information search and integration skills**

**Writing RAs [research articles]**

**However**, this brief overview conceals large variations between respondents: the differences may be due to individual preferences/attitudes, or to disciplinary variations.

## Phase 2(a)



These broad interview questions were intended **not only** to yield an initial sense of the attitudes of faculty members across different

English language test at the end of the third year of undergraduate study, **but also** to establish the feasibility of the main study.

All interviewees agreed there was a need for POSTgraduate students to reach higher English proficiency.

Not all interviewees saw the need for discipline-specific English language assessment for UNDERgraduates, several referring to

Some comments suggested impractical goals, e.g. \*\*\*

There was considerable variability in the priorities expressed by different faculty members.

## Moving to Phase 2(b)



Phase 2b was to be brought in if the findings from the preliminary study

## Phase 2(b)



The team in Beijing will need to implement the planning decisions made in the next team meeting.

The next steps will be:

- collect data

- analyze data

- interpret results

- report results to all stakeholders

This will be no small task.

## Phase 3



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to define the construct of EAP competence; and  
to establish a solid theoretical foundation for its assessment.

and her colleagues hope that they will have arrived at a relevant and useful construct for the Chinese, or at least Beijing, context.

## Beyond Phase 3



It should be noted that from the earliest discussion of this project, BCERA colleagues have had the improvement of teaching and learning as their over-arching goal.

Following Sawaki (2017), the project aims ultimately not only to identify appropriate language skills for disciplines/faculties/departments, in order to **develop a template for the creation of discipline-oriented assessments to fit those needs**, but also to closely consider the need for revision of teaching materials and the need for improvement in teaching and learning practices.

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## APPENDIX: Guidelines for preliminary interviews



1. In your opinion, what are student needs for English in your discipline? Why? (Overarching question)
2. Specifically, what are their needs for English skills such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and translating, respectively? Why?
3. In addition to these basic skills, what are their needs for English that are particularly relevant to their subject learning and research? Why?
4. What are the differences between undergraduates and postgraduates' needs for English in your discipline? Why?
5. What kind of English courses do you think should be provided for your students (both undergraduates and graduates)?  
For example, EGP? EAP? EGAP? ESAP? (The interviewer may need to explain the difference between these two concepts)?