

# **Groping in the Dark or Turning on the Light**

Routes into Teaching English for Academic Purposes

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# Scope and Outline

‘We would be particularly interested in hearing your views on the challenges of setting up and running a short, intensive EAP Teacher Education course’

- Brief introduction to the Heriot-Watt EAP Teacher Development course
- Exploring the context for the course
  - ♦ Development of EAP as a field in comparison with another emerging field
  - ♦ Results of a survey of EAP teachers
  - ♦ Teachers’ views of the transition to teaching EAP
  - ♦ Key differences between parent ELT and offspring EAP
- Description and evaluation of the course

# EAP Teacher Trainers



Jenifer Spencer

Olwyn Alexander

Sue Argent



Josie Pilcher

# Emergence of EAP as a distinct field

- Development of a field using a model of ‘knowledge flows as ‘creators of institutional legitimacy’
- Comparison of EAP and Project Management

Main sources:

Blomquist, Y and Söderholm, A. (2002) How project management got carried away. In Sahlin-Andersson, K. and Söderholm, A. *Beyond Project Management: new perspectives on the temporary-permanent dilemma*, 25-38 Copenhagen: Liber and Copenhagen Business School Press.

Jordan, R.R. (2002) The growth of EAP in Britain. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1/1, 69-78

## First knowledge flow in response to needs

Knowledge flows, carriers and vehicles	Project Management	English for Academic Purposes
Early origins based on felt needs	to control large scale projects	to support overseas students at universities
Specific techniques and tools	PERT (Program Evaluation and Control Technique) and CPM (Critical Path Method)	EPBT (English Proficiency Test Battery or Davies Test) and other diagnostic tests.
Movement within the field	engineers worked in other industries	tutors worked in isolation in a few universities

## Second knowledge flow produces generic tools

Knowledge flows, carriers and vehicles	Project Management	English for Academic Purposes
Consultants	apply PM to other areas	apply EAP in other contexts, e.g. overseas
Generic tools	PERT, CPM and E/V (Earned Value)	function / genre analysis to understand texts and tasks and later corpus linguistics

## Third knowledge flow establishes a public arena

Knowledge flows, carriers and vehicles	Project Management	English for Academic Purposes
Professional associations	International Project Management Association (IPMA)	Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students (SELMOUS) later BALEAP
First conference	1967	1975 (jointly with BAAL)
First journal	Project Management journal 1969	Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP) 2002

## Fourth flow contributes to the legitimacy of the field

Knowledge flows, carriers and vehicles	Project Management	English for Academic Purposes
Standardisation	Project Management Body of Knowledge 1987 (PMBOK) Project Management Professional qualification (PMP)	Teacher resource books and course books; IELTS / TOEFL? Accreditation scheme for pre-sessional courses 1991 EAP teacher competencies
Research	increasing numbers of PM dissertations and theses	BALEAP register of current research 1995
Training	Universities incorporate PM into management degrees and consultants organize training courses based on PMBOK	Universities incorporate EAP into Applied Linguistics and TESOL degrees short courses at Heriot-Watt, SOAS and Nottingham
Influence on parent field	new paradigm for management based on teams organizations changing to managing by projects	New paradigm for teaching English? At least a recognition that EAP is different from EFL



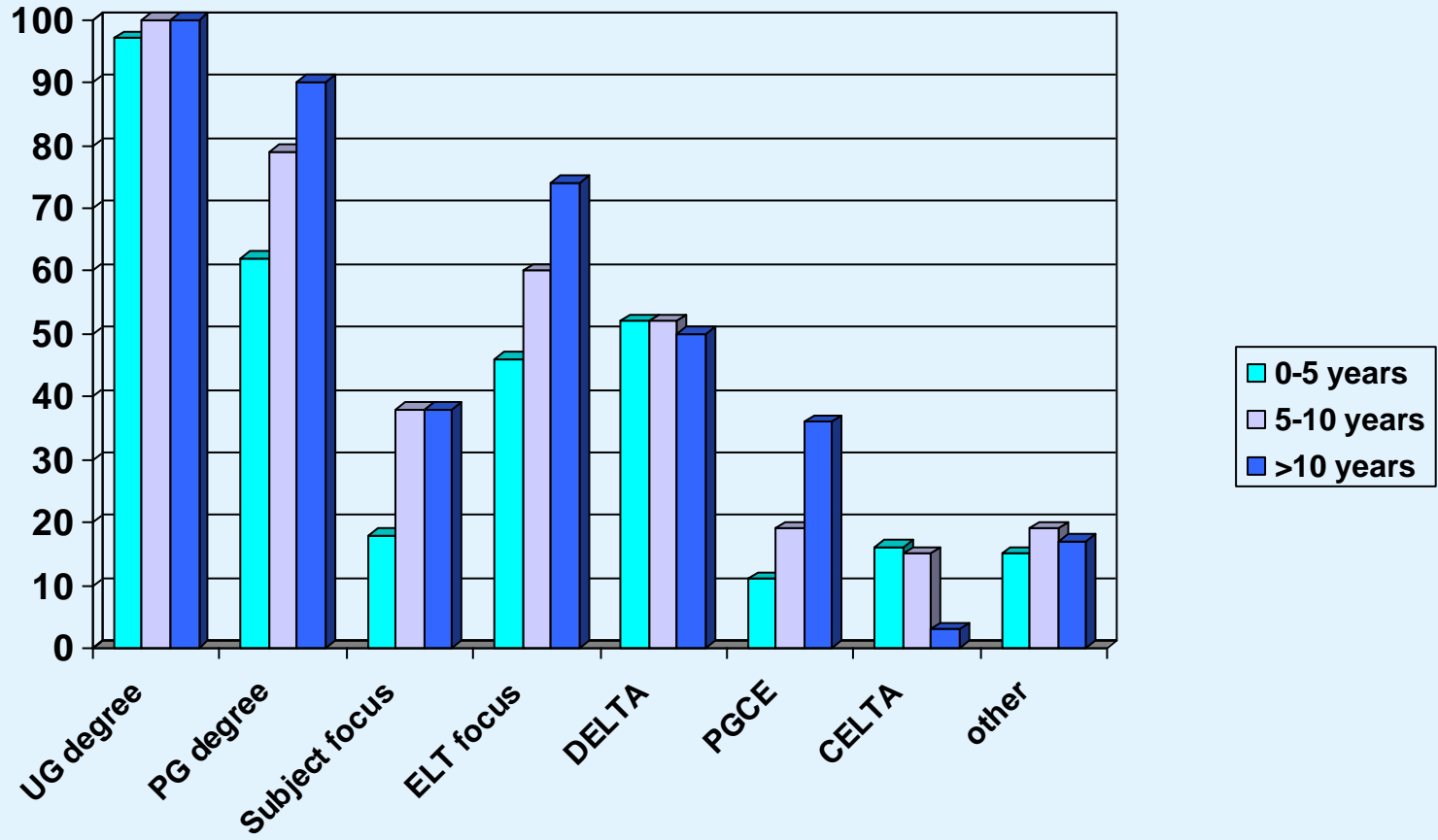
## Where we are now

- Taken for granted aspects of EAP essential in training
  - ♦ response to felt needs
  - ♦ use of generic tools to analyse texts in specific contexts
  - ♦ emphasis on developing materials
- Still emerging aspects of EAP
  - ♦ establishing professional status
  - ♦ standardising knowledge and skills [competencies]
  - ♦ standardising teacher education [portfolios]

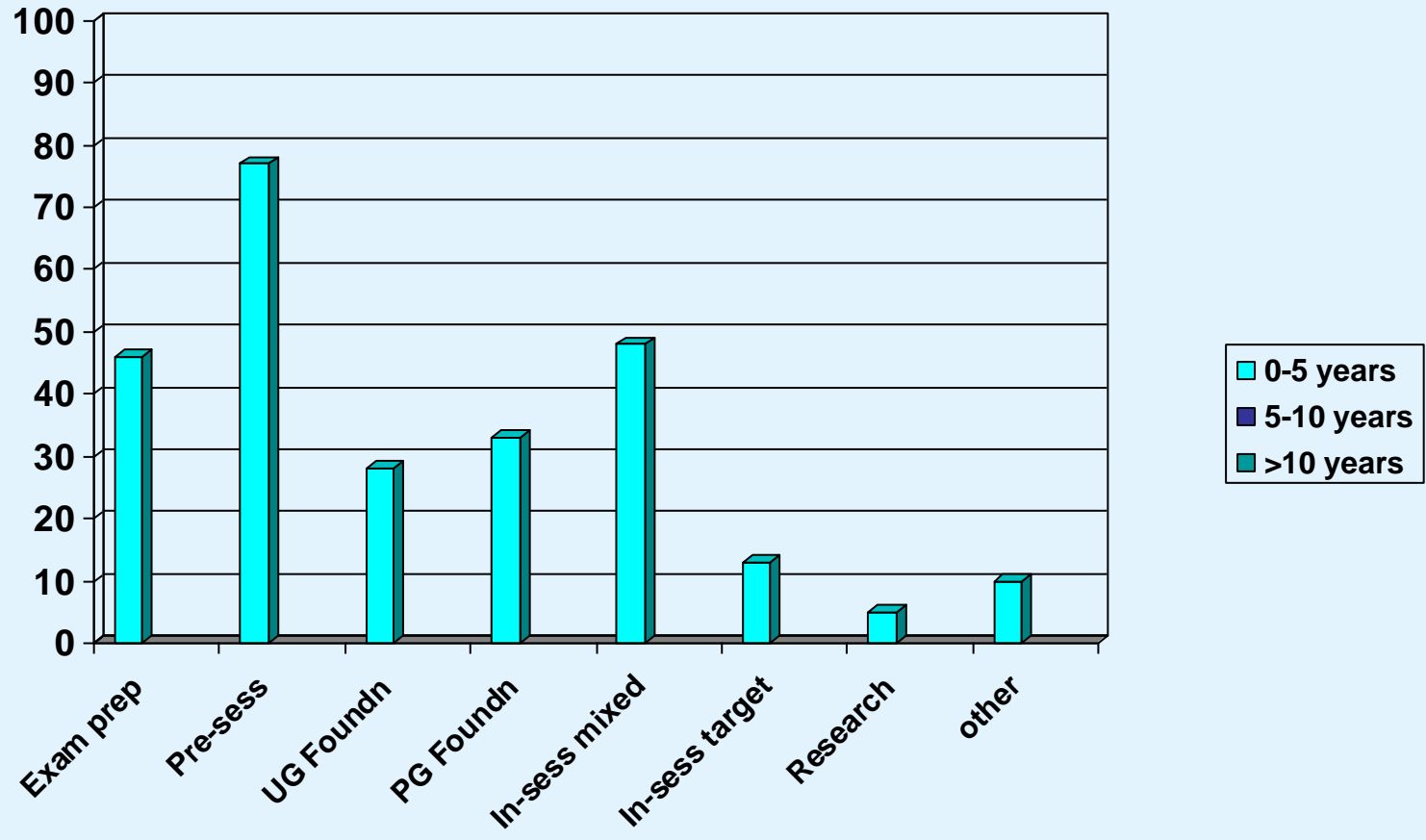
# Routes into teaching EAP

- Survey available online 14<sup>th</sup> April - 4<sup>th</sup> August, 2006
- Advertised to BALEAP discussion list
- 175 responses: 6 incomplete, 25 completed multiple choice questions only, not the final open-ended question
- Responses grouped into categories based on years of experience:
  - ♦ up to 5 years,
  - ♦ between 5 and 10 years
  - ♦ more than 10 years
- Similar numbers of respondents in each group (61, 48 and 58)
- Data expressed as a percentage of this number for each group to enable comparison between them.

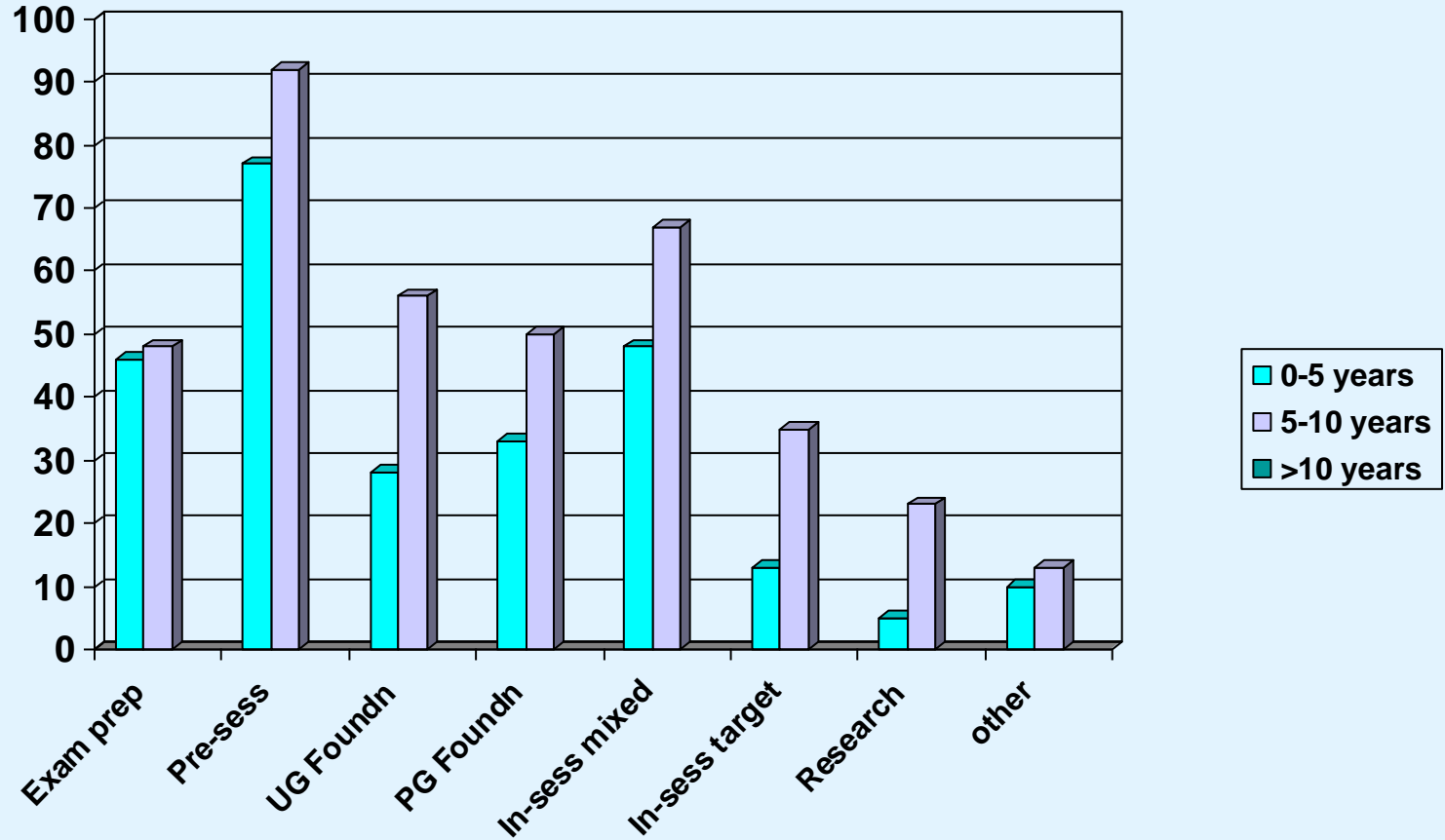
# Qualifications



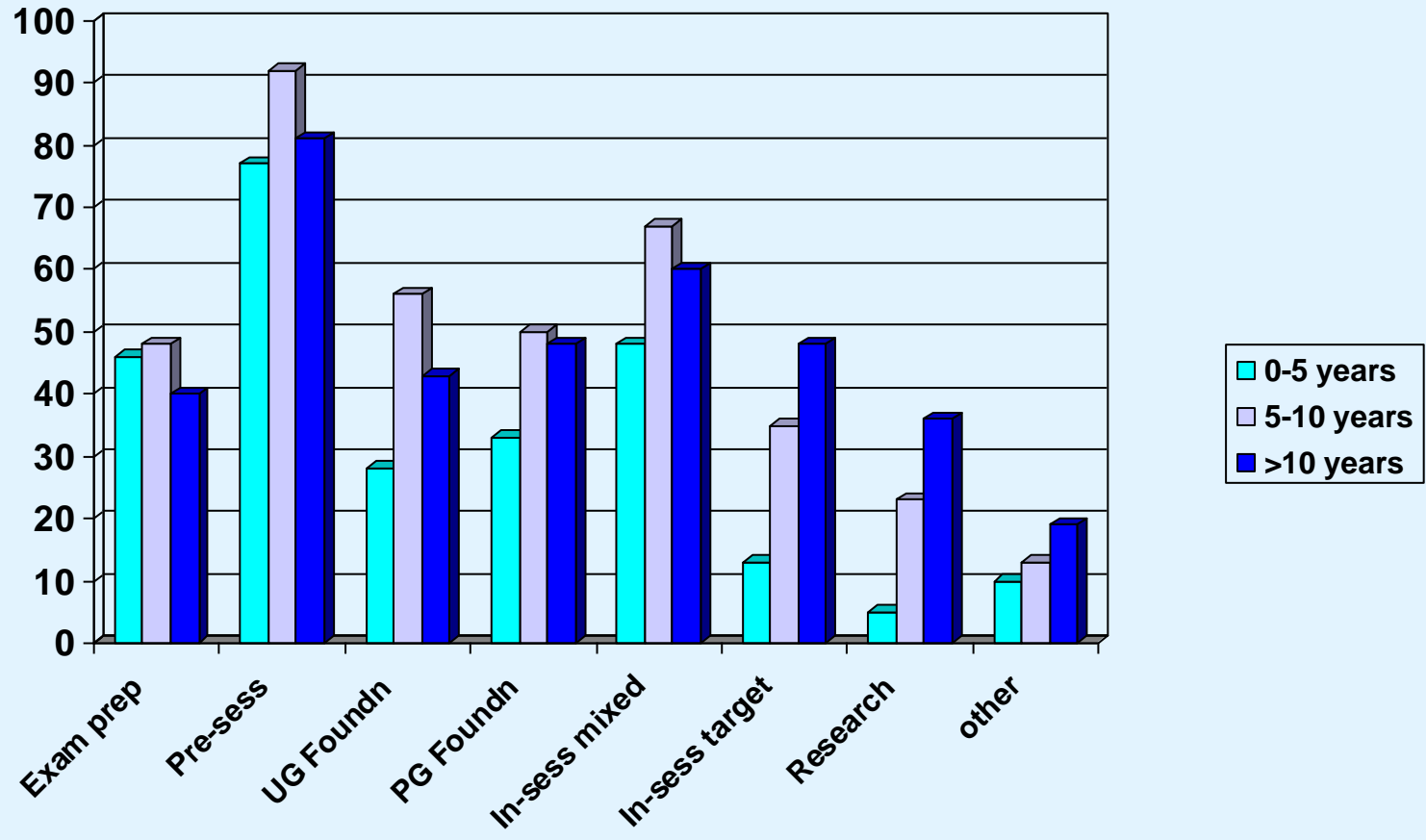
# Types of teaching



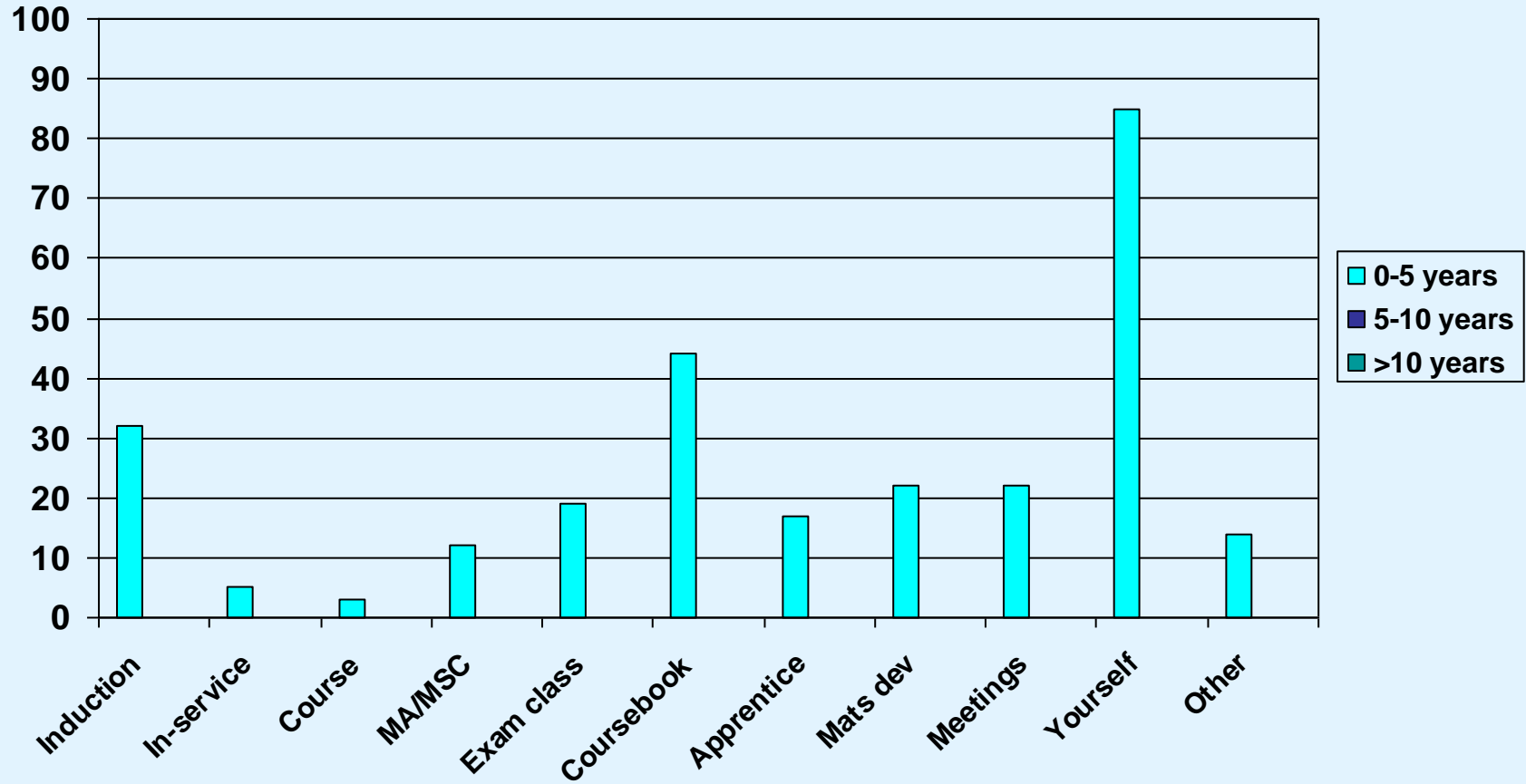
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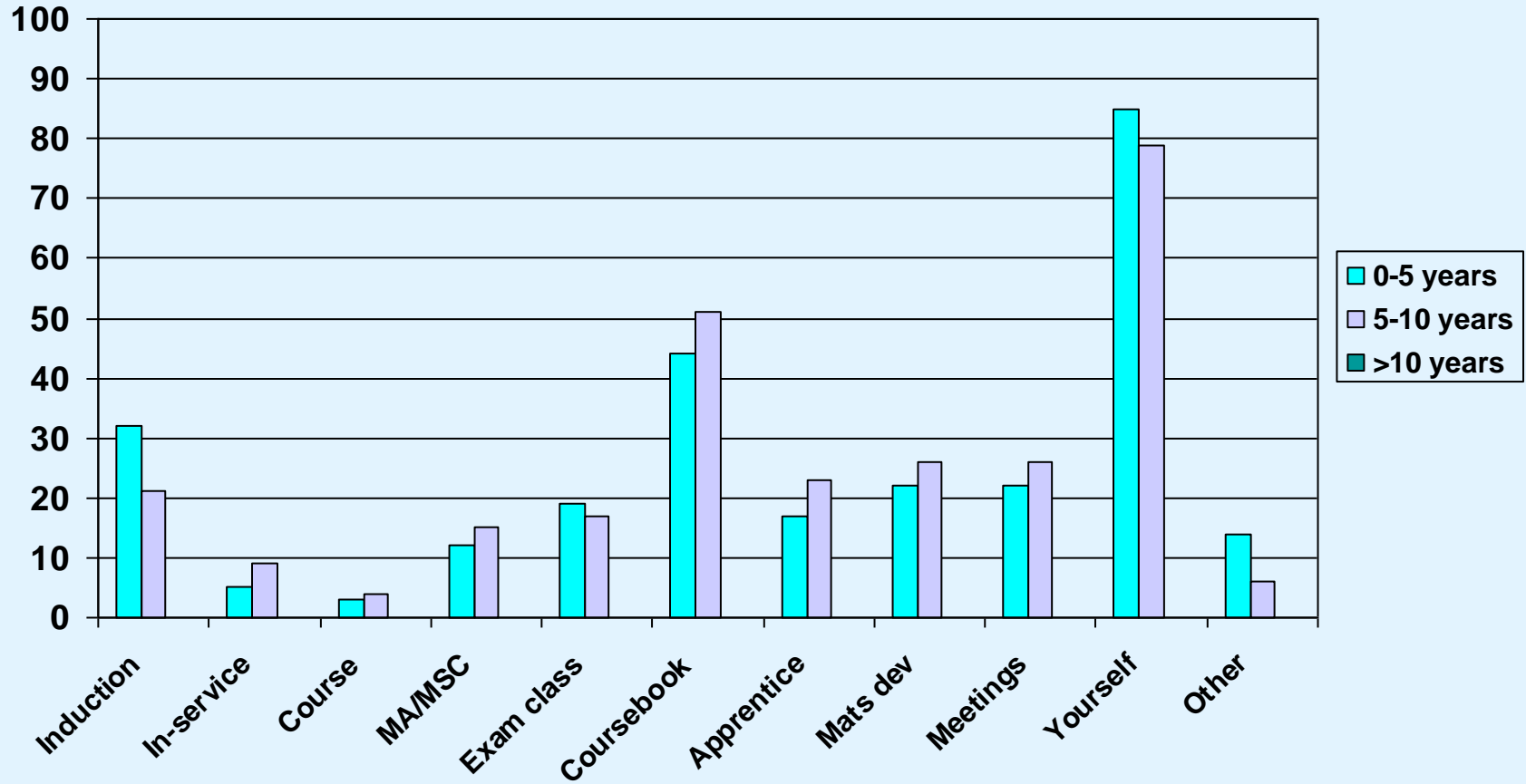
# Types of teaching



# Early training in EAP

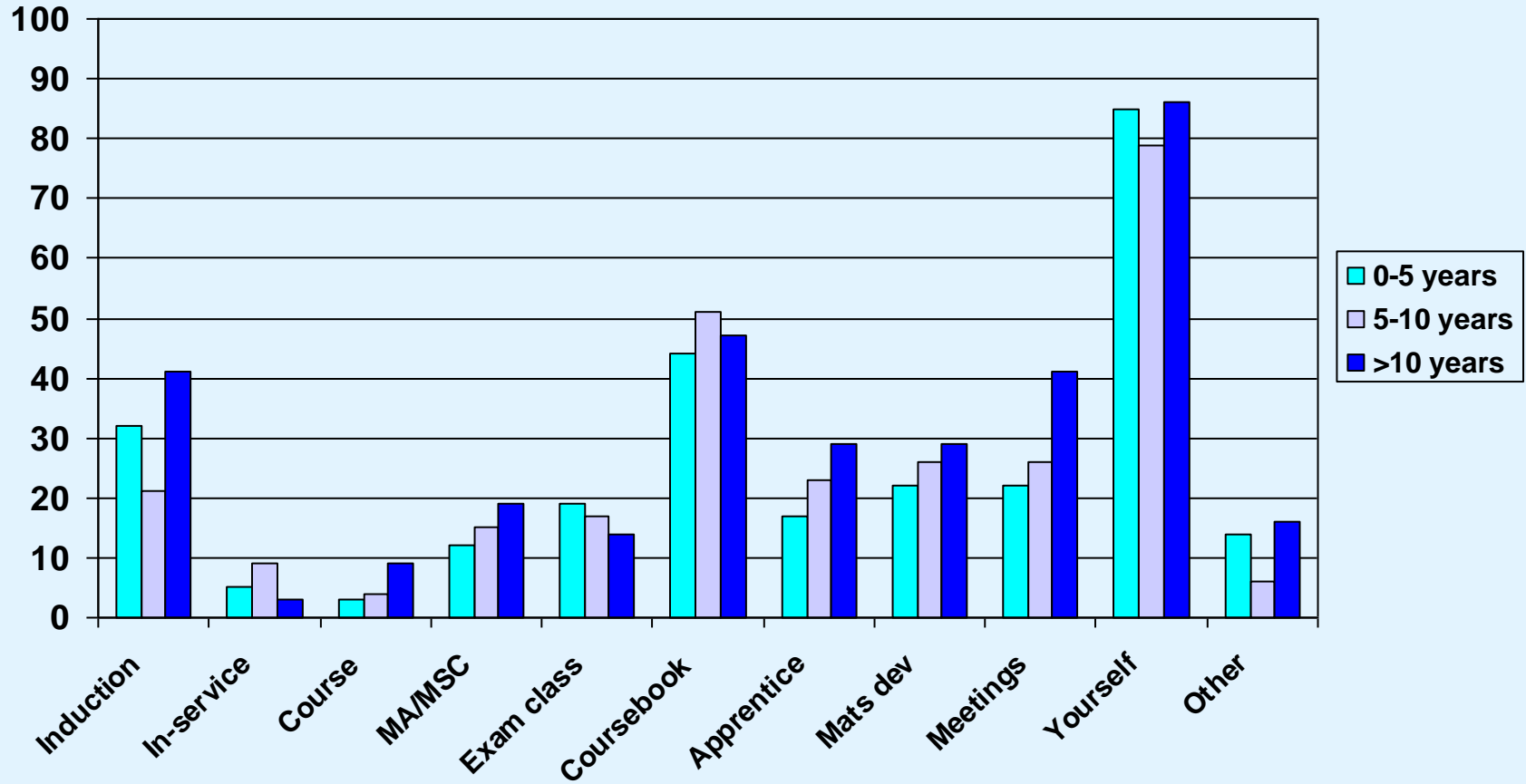


# Early training in EAP

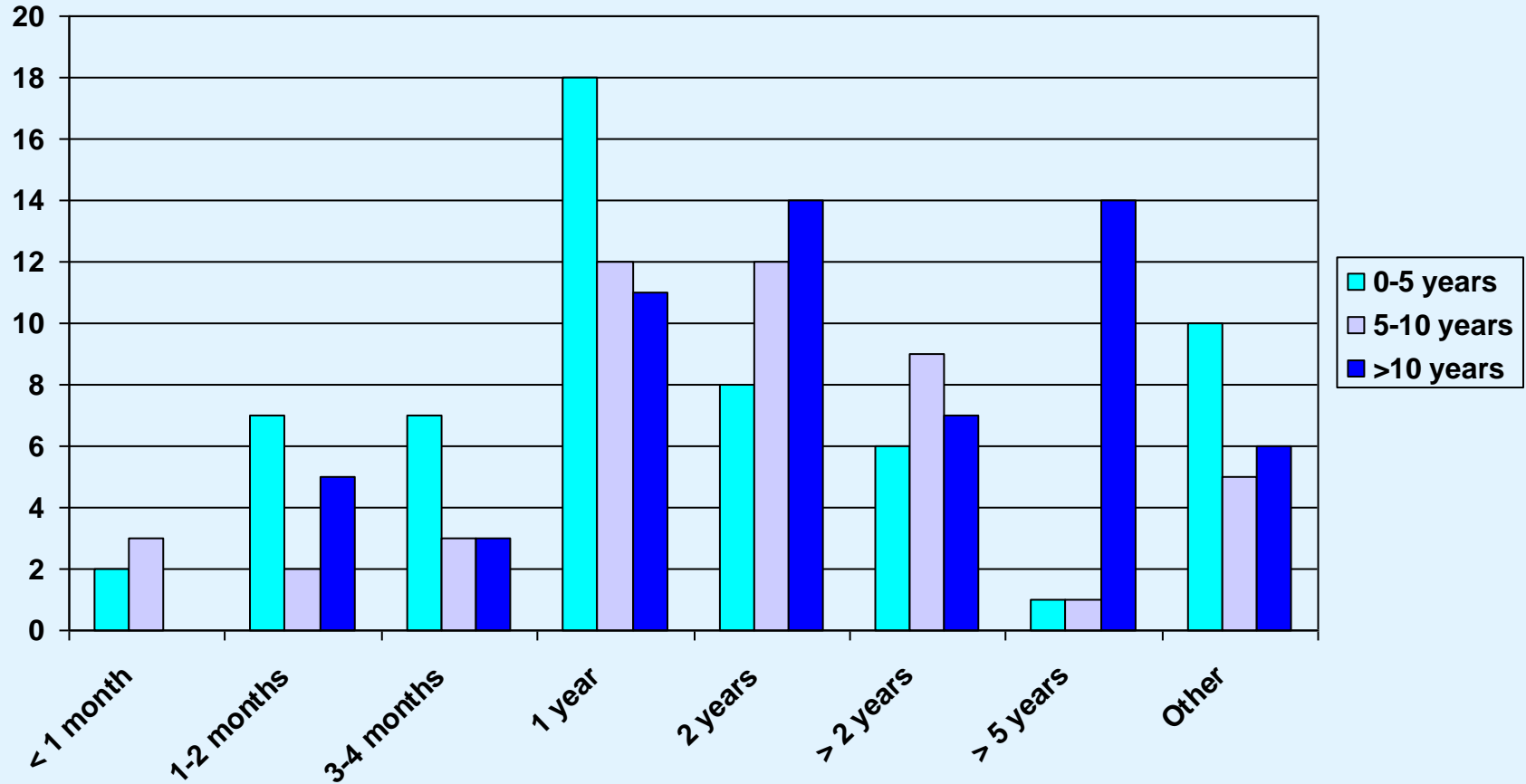




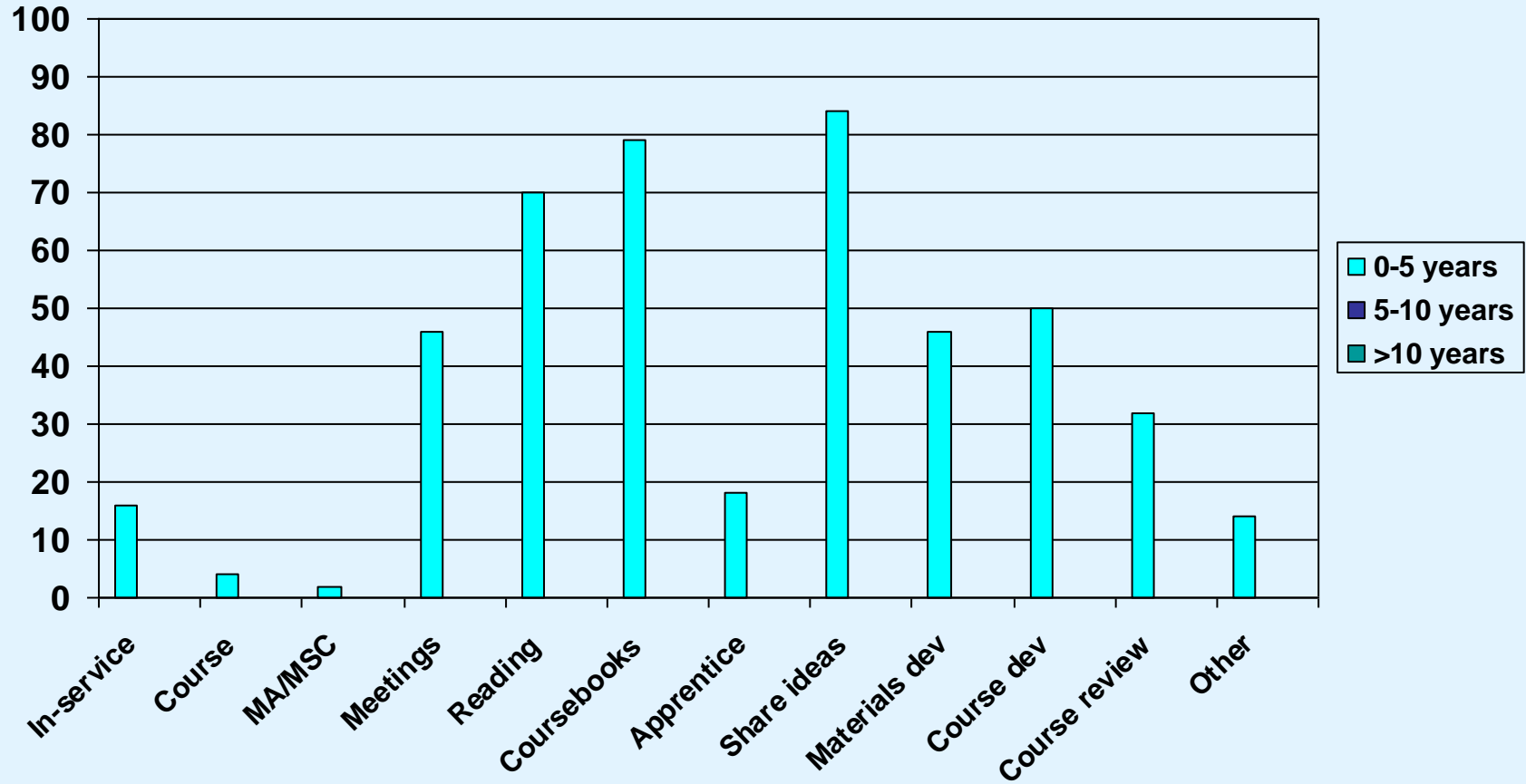
# Early training in EAP



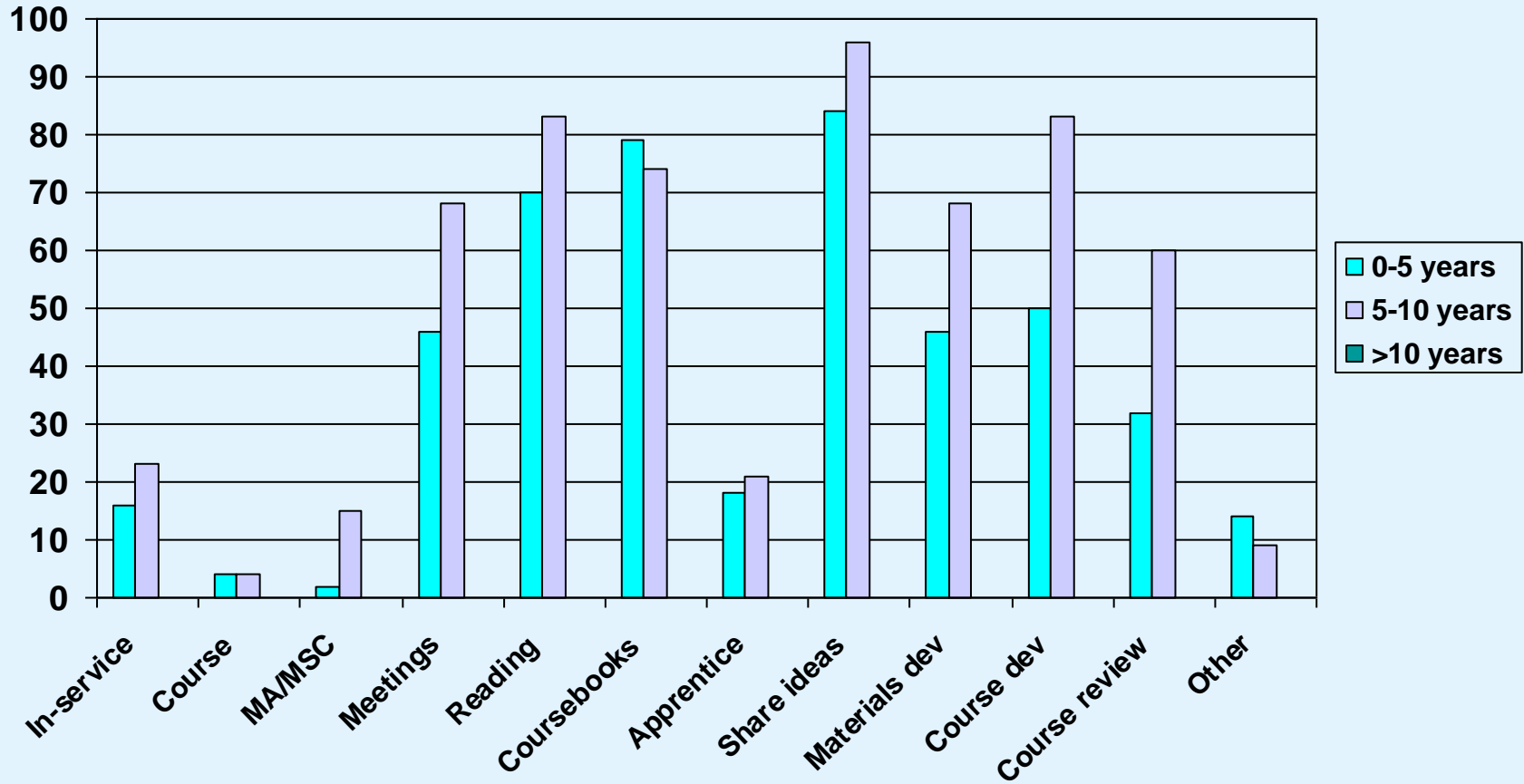
# Time taken to feel confident teaching EAP



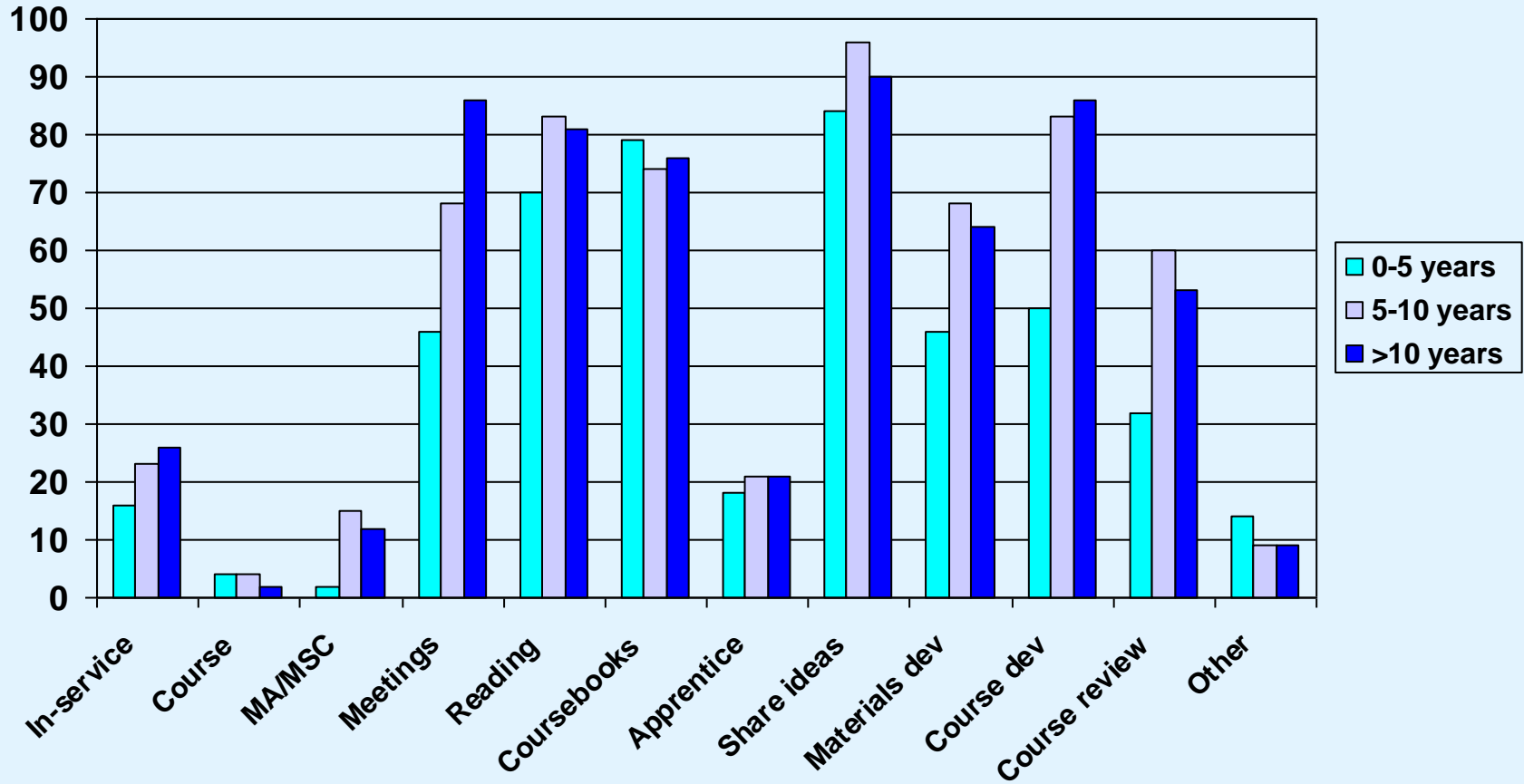
# Continuing professional development



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## Transferability of qualifications across the profession

I would like to say that it would be great to have one qualification which combines *theory AND practice* for this job. It was so difficult for me to know what exactly I needed to do to get this job. I decided on an MA, but would feel more secure if I also had a higher teaching qualification than the Cert in case I had to move back into the FE sector which now requires at least a Dip., preferably a PGCE. I feel like we're in a very 'in-between' place. (*my italics*)

## Need for an EAP-Specific teaching qualification

I truly believe that EAP can be picked up with practice, and support, and that there is really no need for a distinct qualification in this field. As long as the teacher is experienced *and is given a thorough induction and on-going support* the need to pay to study for such an EAP certificate/diploma can be avoided... although I can see the sense in including one module within a Master's course.

*(my italics)*

# Challenges in first teaching EAP



What do you consider the main challenge in learning to teach EAP?	Percentage (N=190)	Content or delivery focus
Knowledge or materials related to student needs in their disciplines	18	Content
Understanding what EAP involves	18	Content
Understanding and meeting student needs	11	Content
Dealing with mixed discipline/level classes	10	Delivery
Difference between EFL and EAP	8	Content ?
Developing own skills to meet student needs	6	Content ?
Lack of support or resistance from colleagues or institution	6	Working conditions
Making EAP interesting	5	Content and delivery ?
Understanding cultural shifts that students have to make	4	Content ?



# Challenges in first teaching EAP

What do you consider the main challenge in learning to teach EAP?	Percentage (N=190)	Content or delivery focus
Dealing with low level students	3	Content?
High work load	3	Working conditions
Lack of formal training	2	Working conditions
Making EAP relevant or authentic	2	Content?
Constraints on class time (to cover what is needed)	1	Delivery
Low student motivation	1	Delivery
Inappropriate teaching materials	1	Content

## Summary of survey findings

- Confirms anecdotal evidence - very little formal initial training
- Formal support through apprenticeship is not common
- Most continuing professional development is through informal routes
- Most teachers have to find out for themselves what is appropriate for their context
- Main challenges concern content: understanding materials and student needs in the disciplines

# Surveys of Teachers on Pre-sessional Courses University of Hertfordshire 2001



## Deficiencies in the DELTA syllabus (Roberts)

‘what comes out of DELTA courses and seems to typify EFL teachers is an activities driven teaching-centred approach’ in which ‘it is the teacher, or more often the coursebook, [that] has made the relevant decisions’

## How well the DELTA prepares teachers for EAP (Krzanowski)

- ♦ DELTA course provides no direct preparation for teaching EAP
- ♦ language and skills focus too narrow and prescriptive
- ♦ has an academic rigour which later helps
- ♦ does encourage independent and reflective practice
- ♦ new EAP teachers often shocked by issues of content, e.g. disparity between challenging level of EAP materials and low level of English of EAP students.
- ♦ lack of in-house training and support.

# Surveys of Teachers on Pre-sessional Courses University of Nottingham 2004



How well short induction courses prepare teachers for EAP (King)

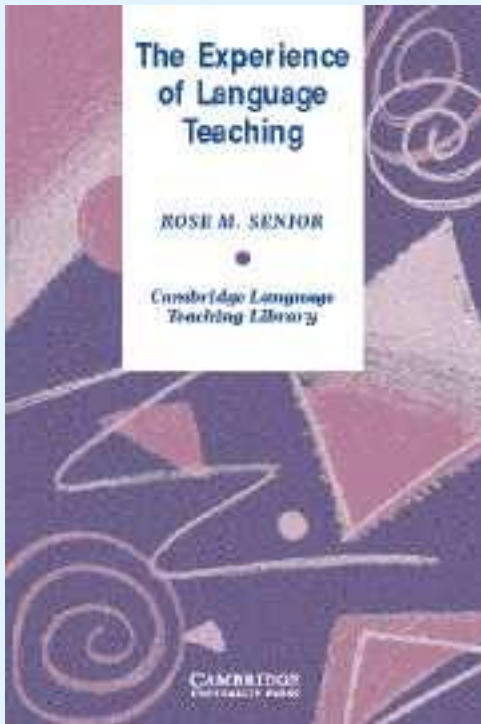
- ♦ The pace of EAP is much faster than ELT
- ♦ Prescribed materials lead to a drier approach
- ♦ Adopt a 'talk and chalk' approach rather than 'fun' activities
- ♦ Language skills are secondary to study skills although students' language level can be quite low
- ♦ EAP concepts sometimes difficult for teachers to understand
- ♦ Tension between assessing students and providing tutorial support
- ♦ Lack experience and understanding of assessment procedures
- ♦ Teachers felt deskilled because EAP led them to question their previous teaching experience and doubt their own abilities.

# Data from EAP Teacher Development course

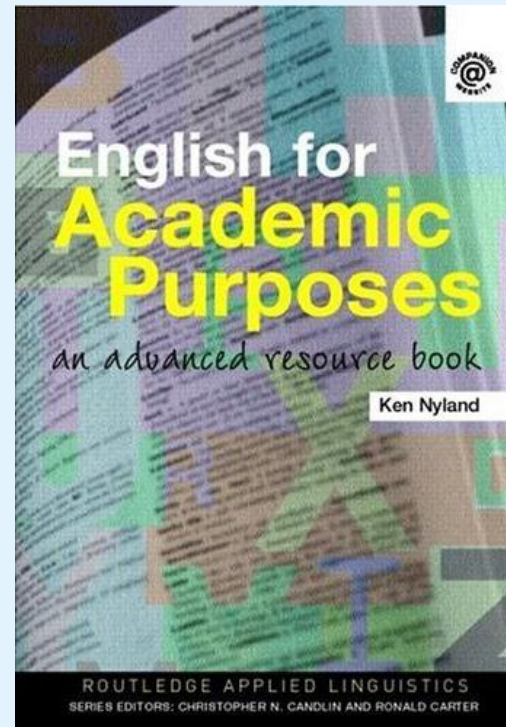
Data collected between 2002 and 2004 in the form of needs expressed by participants at the beginning of each course.

- Two most frequently expressed general needs
  - ♦ to gain confidence teaching EAP
  - ♦ to share current practice with a group of EAP practitioners.
- More specific needs
  - ♦ to 'go beyond IELTS' and understand the conventions and expectations of the academic context
  - ♦ to be able to design syllabuses which would take students to where they needed to be for degree level study and
  - ♦ to make EAP more fun, less dry and more motivating.
  - ♦ to make students more active, independent and collaborative
  - ♦ to develop students critical and analytical skills
  - ♦ to tackle plagiarism

# The difference between ELT and EAP



Focus on delivery



Focus on content

# *The Experience of Language Teaching* by Rose Senior



## Prioritises delivery over content

- Using a teacher-generated framework it covers a range of aspects of classroom life: how teachers create environments suitable for language practice, how they get students 'on-side', how they manage tricky students, how they enhance the learning experience, how they develop and maintain a spirit of community. The book demonstrates how paying attention to both the learning and social needs of their class groups enables language teachers to behave in flexible ways that promote learning.  
(*Cambridge English Language Teaching* online)

*English for Academic Purposes: an advanced resource book* by Ken Hyland



## Prioritises content over delivery

- The book provides a platform for readers to engage with the main issues of the field through a series of chapters discussing the main terms and ideas, extracts from key readings and numerous research tasks. (p xv)
- 'Wider understandings are developed... *by studying texts* in a comparative and questioning way which explores the relationship between disciplinary practices, institutional contexts and rhetorical practices.' (p 31).  
(*my italics*)



# Differences between ELT and EAP

	ELT	EAP
Focus of teaching	Level driven main focus: what a student can do now (and moving on from this)	Goal driven main focus: where a student has to get to
Time available	Relatively flexible; a student may opt in and out of ELT at various points in life	Strictly limited and probably a one-off endeavour
Consequences for the student	Usually less pressure for specific achievement: focus is on personal achievement	Failure has serious consequences: refused entry to a degree programme or costly further study

# Differences between ELT and EAP

	ELT	EAP
Language content	Potentially the totality of the English language.	Limited to academic discourse
Skills content	Speaking, listening, reading and writing equally important; students determine priority.	Main emphasis on reading and writing
Other skills content	Less emphasis on study skills or only for language learning.  Cognitive skills not overt	Study skills emphasised: learner independence and critical thinking. Overt cognitive skills focus
Materials	Texts and tasks for self expression, short and quickly covered. Personal response and creativity valued	Texts and tasks for communicating information, long and dense. Clarity and objectivity valued.

# Differences between ELT and EAP

	ELT	EAP
Teacher – Student roles	Not equal: Teacher as expert and student as novice	Teacher and student both learning about the academic community; student more expert in subject discipline
Text choice	Traditional emphasis on sentence grammar; teacher-selected topics drive text choice.	Required emphasis on discourse grammar; needs in the disciplines drive text choice.
Text exploitation	Tendency to move from text to text within a topic to maintain interest; each text has different learning focus.	More time spent on each text to exploit it fully; the same text has a range of learning focuses.

# Summary of the context for the course

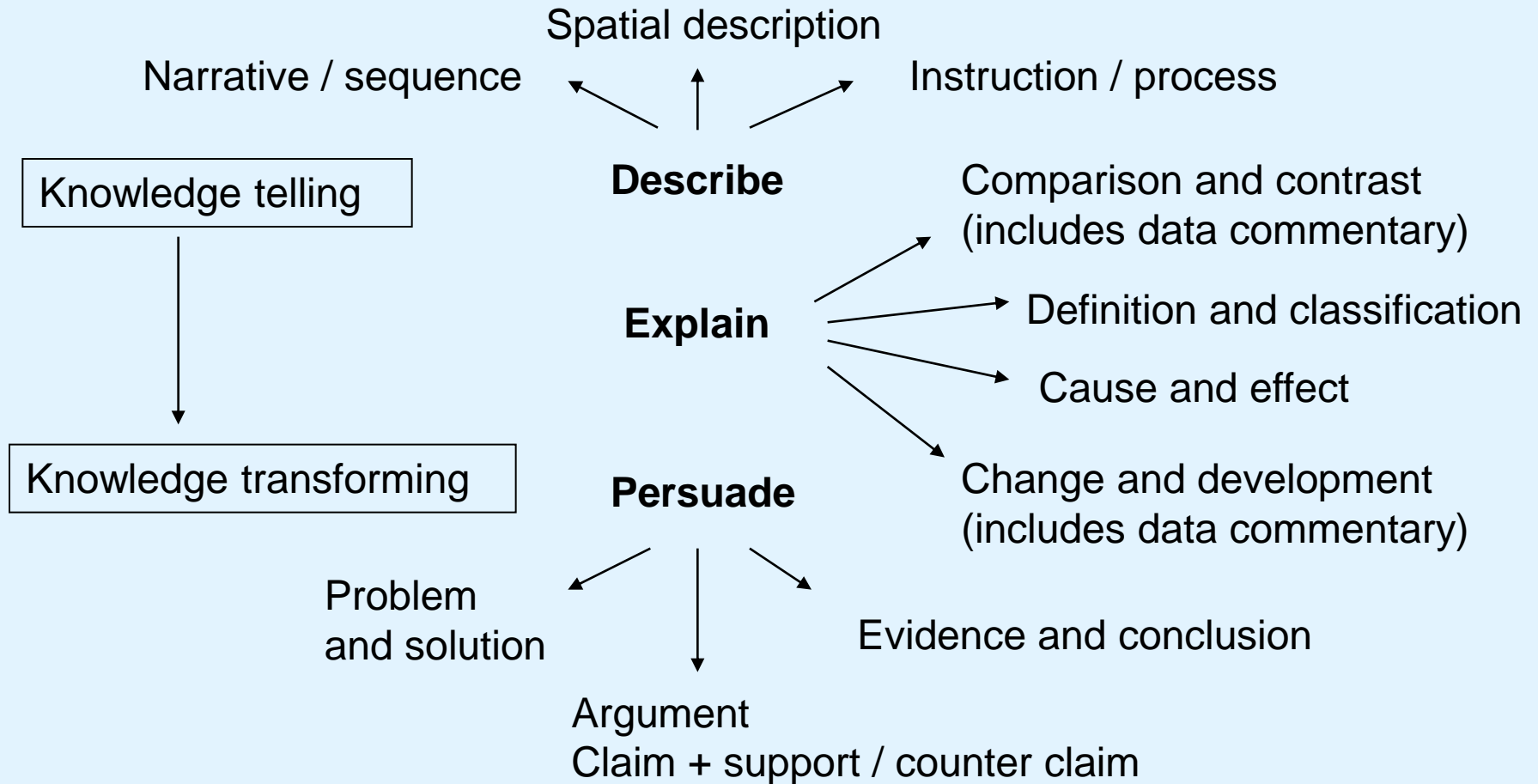
- ELT prioritises delivery over content
  - ♦ anything counts as content
  - ♦ teachers are able to create lessons from nothing
- Teachers feel deskilled when move to teaching EAP
  - ♦ content is the priority
  - ♦ student needs relate to target discipline not language level
- ELT teachers tend not to have the generic tools
  - ♦ to approach texts in the disciplines
  - ♦ to create materials appropriate for their own context
- Lack of 'thorough induction and on-going support'.
- May lead to teacher resistance to EAP approaches

# EAP Teacher Development course aims



- to demystify the EAP context by unpacking students' needs and lecturers' requirements at university
- to give teachers the skills to understand and analyse discipline-specific texts and exploit them effectively for EAP by making them more aware of discourse structures and processes
- to give teachers the confidence to identify and transfer appropriate general English delivery techniques to the EAP classroom through practical demonstration
- to provide time for practical application, discussion and reflection

# Rhetorical functions



# Course timetable

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.30	Welcome & Introduction Teacher needs	Approaches to text 1: purpose and structure	Study skills: task design for independent learning and critical thinking	Supporting writing: feedback and assessment	Approaches to academic listening
10.45	Coffee break				
11.15	Feedback on reflective task – student needs	Approaches to academic reading: The Big Picture	Approaches to text 2: building a message – patterns in text	Approaches to text 3: dealing with difficult texts	Reflection and review of the week
12.30	Lunch break				
1.30	What is academic English? Institution needs	Supporting writing: lexical reference pages	Supporting writing: in at the deep end with a life belt	The relationship with subject lecturers	Discussion: hot topics and burning issues
2.45	Coffee				
3.15	Approaching an EAP syllabus	Tutorial: Selecting texts and using the AWL	Tutorial: Exploiting texts	Tutorial: Designing some EAP tasks	

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# Mapping the course onto EAP teacher competencies

A competent EAP teacher is someone who

- Understands the norms and conventions of universities and how they function
- Is able to explain how academic texts convey meaning through purpose, organisation and rhetorical structure
- Is able to create materials informed by syllabus and student needs from authentic texts
- Is able to work with unfamiliar subject areas and engage with the ideas they present
- Is able to apply ideas from research to own practice
- Assumes that teacher and students are equals in the learning process
- Adopts a critical approach to own practice

# End of Course Evaluation

- At the end of each course participants discuss in groups the general needs articulated on day 1 and complete an individual questionnaire
  - ♦ what they learned that was useful for them personally
  - ♦ how their ideas about EAP teaching have changed.
- General comments
  - ♦ the focus on functions and discourse analysis – helps move away from a narrow focus on grammar and skills training, ‘to get beyond the sentence’.
  - ♦ functional syllabus helps to understand how to ‘get students where they need to be’ in manageable steps and allows students to ‘write within their competence’

# End of Course Evaluation

- Specific comments
  - ♦ I had never really understood the point of Jordan's book (Academic Writing) but now I do.
- In saying how their ideas have changed, participants often comment on their preconceived views of what EAP teaching is
  - ♦ EAP is not general English with difficult texts.
  - ♦ The teacher thinks EAP is dull and so teaches in a dull way; now I know what students need it's not dull.
  - ♦ Working towards IELTS doesn't need to be in exam-practice mode but I need to 'sell the syllabus' to exam-focused students
  - ♦ you can't do a 'lesson' on becoming an independent learner
  - ♦ 'Critical' as in 'critical thinking' doesn't just mean constantly questioning. A critical thinker also relates new information to his/her own current understanding.
  - ♦ It is possible to construct contexts in which students are obliged to simulate the degree course content

# Follow up questionnaire

- A questionnaire was sent to previous participants in May 2004 to find out if/how their teaching had developed as a result of the course.
  - ♦ 58 questionnaires sent but only 14 completed questionnaires returned
  - ♦ Absence of negative comment
- General aspects
  - ♦ The course at Heriot Watt provided an excellent overview / summary of EAP.
  - ♦ Your course was a great springboard for me.
- Specific aspects
  - ♦ The area I am most pleased with is teaching academic writing.
  - ♦ I gained confidence in development of discipline specific materials
  - ♦ Confidence to use the skills I learned as an EFL teacher within the context of teaching EAP.
  - ♦ Getting students to think critically in small groups
  - ♦ working with noun phrases is very useful
  - ♦ constructing contexts in which students are obliged to simulate the degree course content
  - ♦ I've had the opportunity to design and pilot a year round pre-sessional programme . . . from virtually nothing . . .

# Conclusion

- Given the limited scope of our course, the balance is about right
- Participants' preconceived ideas about EAP need to be challenged
- They lack skills to go 'beyond the sentence' in texts
- The focus on functions gives a clear framework
- Study skills and topics can be slotted into this framework
- A range of subject disciplines can be catered for within one class
- The framework helps new EAP teachers to design materials they feel confident using with their classes.
- Our overall conclusion is that the course should be practitioner-centred, starting from where the participants are and taking them where they need to be in small manageable steps.

# The biggest challenges?

- Teachers can be very experienced but may have never encountered academic texts
- Some teachers can be very complacent and unwilling to make an effort
- There can be a huge resistance to change