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# Syllabus Design for EAP

University of Leeds

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# Outline

- Aims of the BALEAP Accreditation Scheme
- A view from history
- Influences on EAP syllabus design
- Principles of syllabus design
- Matching course syllabus to teachers' inner syllabus/methodology
- Examples of approaches to course design



# BALEAP ACCREDITATION

The BAS is a **peer-review**, **quality assurance** and **quality enhancement** scheme. The aims of the Scheme are:

- To enhance the quality of learning and teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
- To ensure that EAP provision prepares students for academic study
- Two sets of criteria central to these aims:
  - course design
  - teaching and learning



# Who said....?

*First of all you must read [...] Don't go word by word, rather pay attention only to the meaning, and as though you were trying to grab a body not an appendage.*

*You will also be able to remember many things better if you find someone with whom you can talk about them, and to whom you can share your thoughts.*

Was it	John Swales	Liz Hamp-Lyons
Bill Grabe	Michael Halliday	Ann Johns

Someone else...?



# It was in fact



Guarino Guarini  
1374-1460

- Humanist scholar, teacher & translator
- Placed students at the heart of the learning process
- Saw himself as a guide & facilitator of learning



# A view from history



There is nothing new under the sun but there are  
lots of old things we don't know.

(Ambrose Bierce)



# Early EST syllabuses

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Ewer & Latorre  
1969

Swales 1971

Mixture of  
structures &  
functions

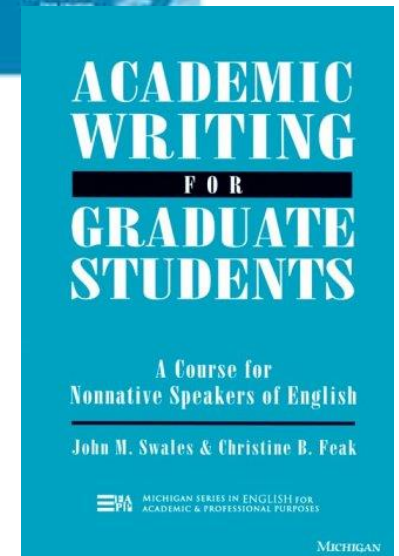
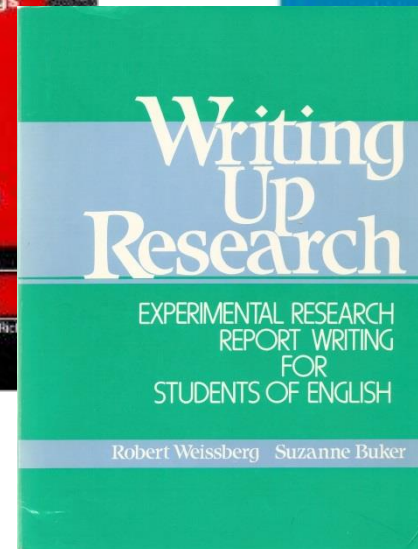
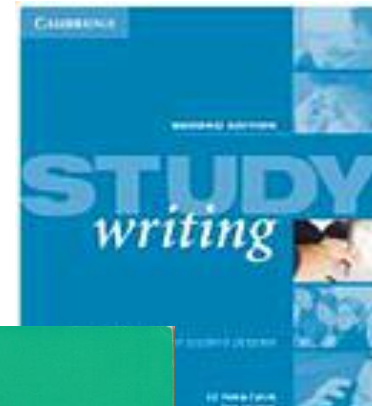
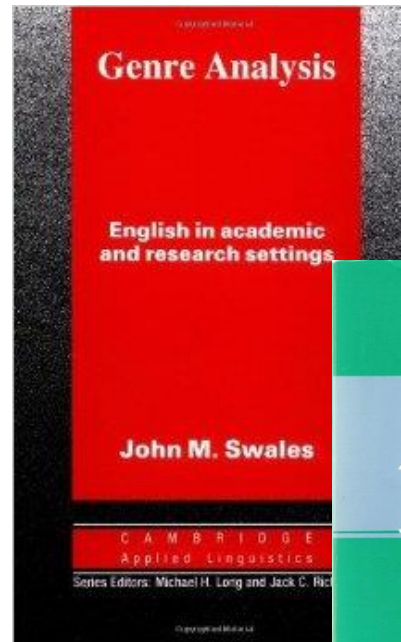
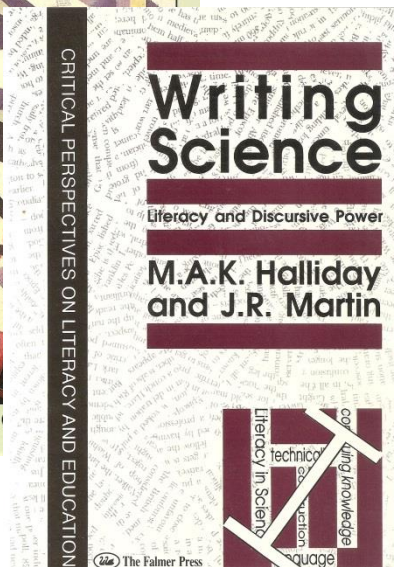
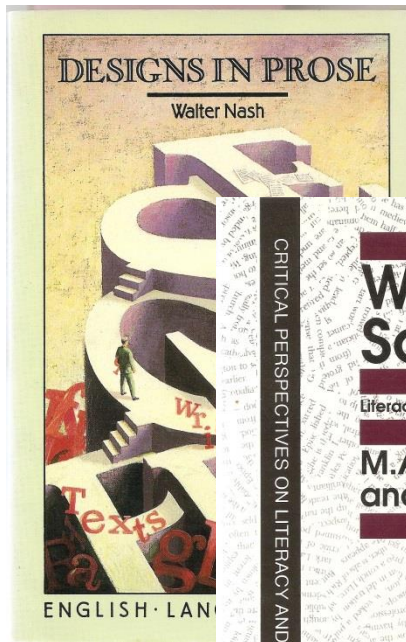


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# Influences on EAP practice

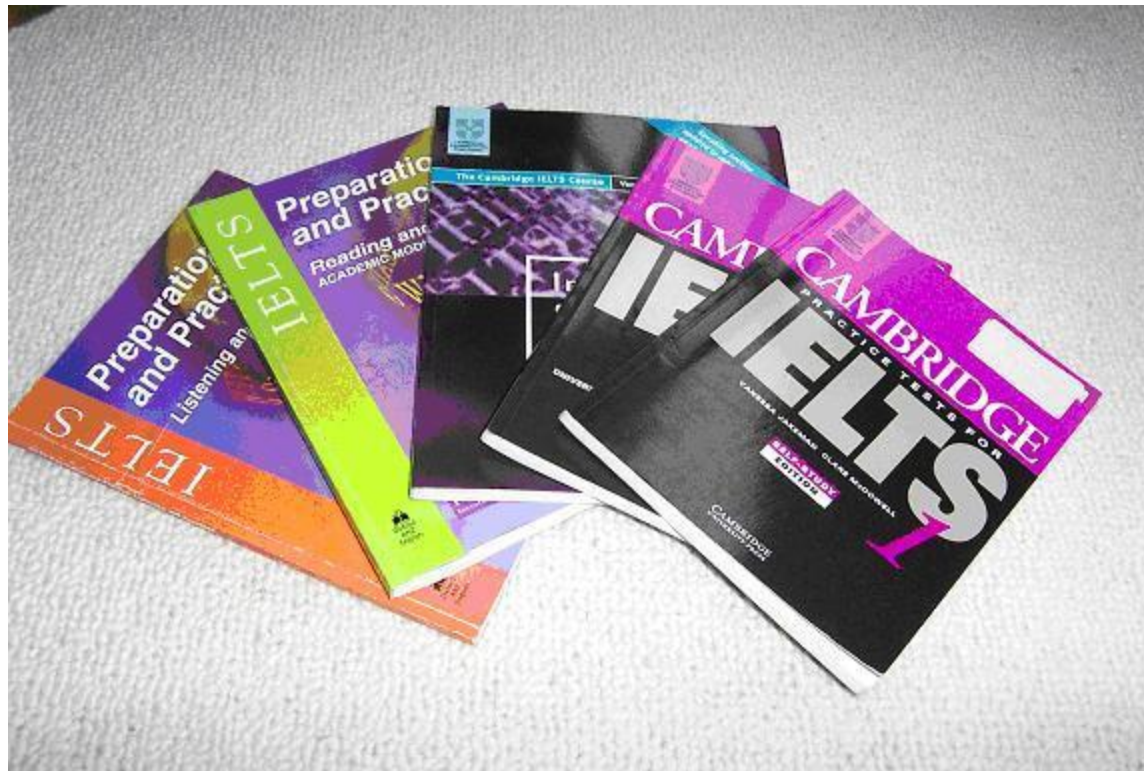


Functions, genres and tasks





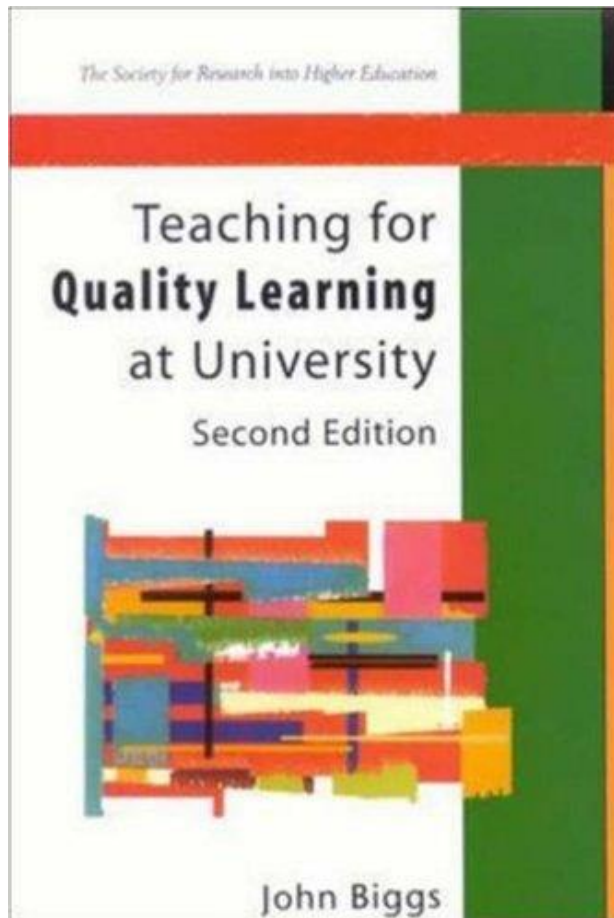
# Influences on EAP syllabuses?



Is the influence from IELTS syllabuses the reason why we often see 'topics & skills' as organising principles?



# Influences from the academy



- The importance of applying to EAP practice the standards expected of staff and students at university



# Definition of EAP

*... the study of English for the purpose of participating in higher education. This study will be centred on the texts (spoken and written) that occur in academic contexts and will include the discourses and practices that surround and give rise to such texts*  
(Bruce, 2011: 6)

Expectation that course design will include study & use of academic texts in specific contexts.



# What is a syllabus for?

A syllabus enables teachers to answer the following questions from students:

- *Why are we doing this?*
- *Why are we doing this now?*
- *How will this help me in my degree?*



# Principles in syllabus design

- **Development** – showing progress towards the main goals and learning outcomes
- **Recycling** – reusing concepts introduced earlier, e.g. explaining problems requires cause/effect to analyse the problem & comparison/contrast to evaluate solutions
- **Transferability** – enabling students to perceive the generic nature of what they are learning & how this translates to new contexts.





# Is your syllabus like this?



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# Is your syllabus like this?





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# Is your syllabus like this?





# An explicit organising principle

- Colours & threads represent different strands of a course woven together
- Strands identified from student needs, prioritised and sequenced in a principled way
- Organising principles of the syllabus stand out
- Other strands such as student autonomy and critical thinking are woven through all aspects of teaching

Thanks to Jenifer Spencer for this idea



# Teachers' inner syllabuses

- Teachers on pre-sessional courses have a wide range of different experiences of teaching EAP
- Teachers' develop an inner syllabus on which they base their teaching
- Syllabus design has to be explicit so teachers can map their inner syllabus to the course syllabus
- The way teachers characterise student needs provides insights into their inner syllabus



# Induction task: student needs

- Think about a class of students you have taught and briefly describe their needs.
- Describe the needs in a way that would enable you to specify components of a course.
- What aspect of student performance have you highlighted in your description?
- Teachers found this task rather hard to do.



# Induction task: teacher talk

- Our talk reflects our underlying priorities & preoccupations
- These are what frame our lessons
- Our talk is also how we justify lesson content to students
- Teachers might frame their description of needs in several ways.



# Students will...

- enjoy the **topic** of this text
- practise the **present perfect** with this text
- discover **definitions** in this text
- learn functional **lexis**, e.g. for cause and effect, from this text
- identify problem-solution **organization** in this text for use in their writing
- identify the purpose, audience, typical structure and style of this **genre**



# Graduate attributes

- Understanding the **conventions** of this text will help students to present themselves as members of their academic community.
- Asking critical questions of this text will help students to engage with the process of **building knowledge** in their field.
- Reflecting on the alignment between their own views and ideas in this text will help students become autonomous & **direct their own learning**.





# Changing priorities

- As we develop as teachers our talk changes
- The effect is cumulative but priorities change
- We never lose sight of topics or grammatical structures as components of a lesson
- However, they stop being the driving force
- It is crucial for teachers to understand the aims and main focus of your syllabus so they can give appropriate weight/time to tasks and activities.



# Course design approaches

Example: three different descriptions of approaches to course design from teacher handbooks and BAS documentation

Discussion: how easy is it for teachers on your pre-sessional to understand the aims & organising principles of your syllabus?

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# ANY QUESTIONS?



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<http://cdn.diabetesdaily.com/voices/files/2012/05/Puzzled1.jpg>