



Institutional Research on Academic Outcomes for Public Sector EAP Students

A Panel Discussion

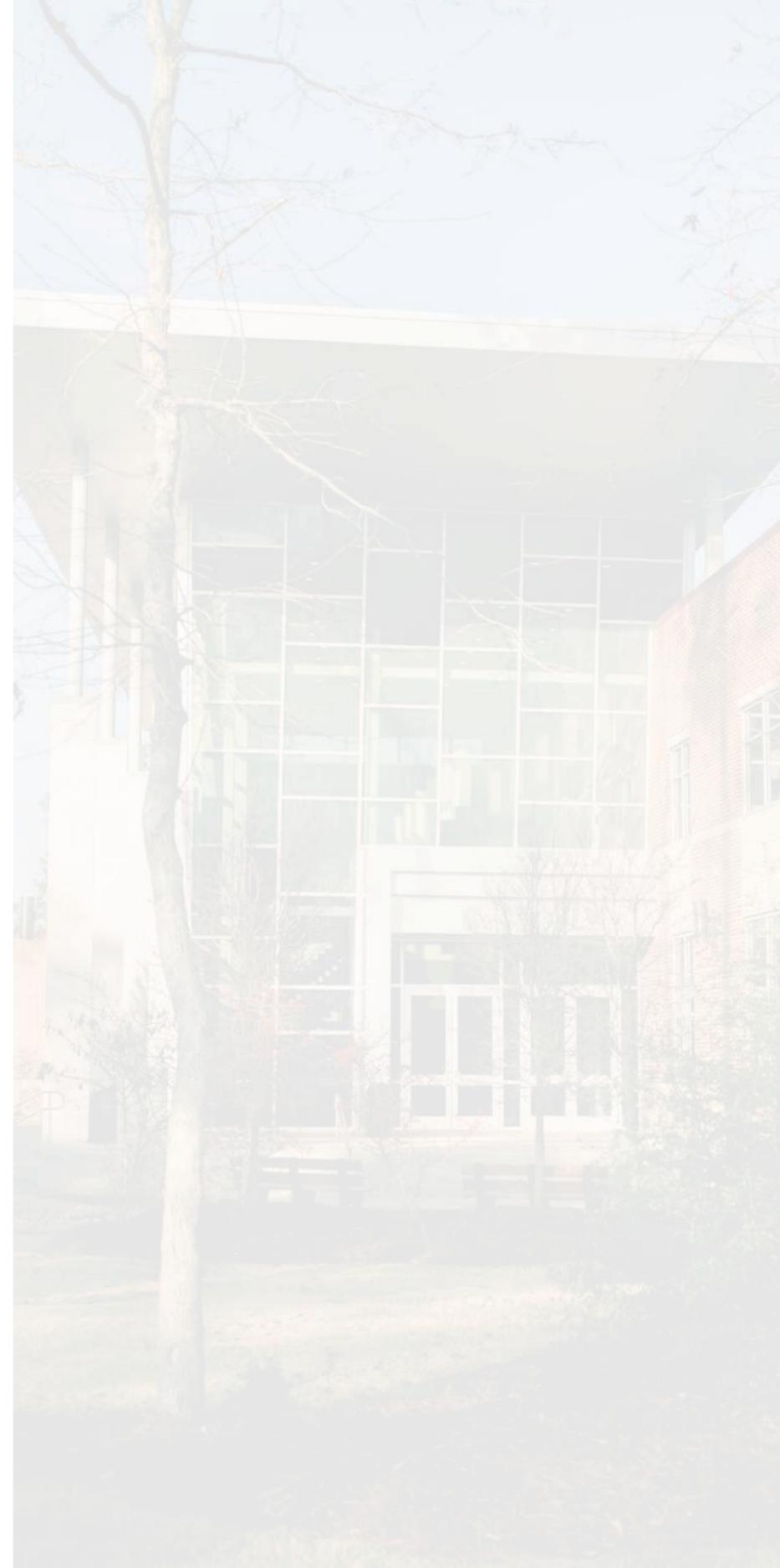
Katie Herlick, Academica Group

Dr. Bruce Russell, University of Toronto

Evan Lavoie, University of Ottawa

Corinne Whitney, Georgian College

Moderator: Dr. Jennifer MacDonald, Languages Canada





Our Agenda

- 01 **Measuring and communicating the Impact of EAP / FAP Programs.**
Jennifer MacDonald
- 02 **Preparing for Success: How Public Sector Language Programs Influence Student Retention and Achievement.**
Katie Herlick
- 03 **Beyond the Cut Score: Associating Long-term International Student Success with Language Pathway Program Outcomes.**
Bruce Russell
- 04 **Measuring the Academic Impact of Public EAP: Evidence from the University of Ottawa.** Evan Lavoie
- 05 **Institutional Research on Academic Outcomes for Public Sector EAP Students.**
Corinne Whitney
- 06 **Discussion and Q & A**

Measuring (and Communicating) the Impact of EAP and FAP Programs

Recognition of the impact of college and university language programs is more important than ever



A Diverse Sector

LC has 39 public-sector programs.

Wide variety of funding models, unit types, programs



The Impacts

Benefits to recruitment, retention, academic success, the student experience, and more.

Challenges to defining, measuring, accessing data on EAP/FAP's "impact"



Lost Messages

18+ LC public program closures or withdrawals since 2023.

Institutions in financial difficulty often cut what is deemed "unessential"

Languages Canada

Preparing for Success: How Public Sector Language Programs Influence Student Retention and Achievement

March 13, 2026

Presentation

Research Objective

Understand Outcomes of EAP/FAP Students

To:

- Demonstrate the value of pathway programs to prospective students
- Tell a collective story about the impact of EAP/FAP to the sector and those within our own institutions

Research Question

Do the academic outcomes of international students who complete an EAP program differ from those who do not complete an EAP program?

Project Overview



Consultation & Research Design

- Reviewed past research
- Recruited participating institutions
- Met with institutional representatives



Research Ethics

- Prepared & submitted REB applications
- Tracked responses & coordinated REB requests



Data Transfer, Analysis, and Reporting

- Collected data from each institution & merged the data
- Data cleaning and coding
- Analysis & report writing

Method

- Data from: 6 universities and 3 colleges
- 5 academic years: 2018/19 to 2022/23
- 104,724 international students
- Data cleaning resulted in 2,084 cases being removed due to missing values
- 102,640 cases for analysis
 - 89,337 college
 - EAP: 2,424
 - No EAP: 86,913
 - 13,303 university
 - EAP: 2,306
 - No EAP: 10,997

Variables

Academic outcome information: Year 1 GPA, Year 2 retention status (retained, not retained)

EAP program information: Program enrolment (enrolled, not enrolled), program length (in number of weeks), program timing (pre-sessional, concurrent)

Demographic information: Gender, birth year, home country

Academic background information: Cohort year, program of study (CIP code), credential pursued, English proficiency test score, high school grade

Key Findings



Retention to Second Year

Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)

Colleges

n=88,031

EAP: 80.1%

No EAP: 87.0%

EAP enrolment is not a predictor of retention after controlling for demographic and academic variables

First Year GPA

Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)

Colleges

n=88,031

EAP: 2.8

No EAP: 3.0

EAP enrolment is not a predictor of first year GPA after controlling for demographic and academic variables

First Year GPA

Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)

Universities

n=13,132

EAP: 2.8

No EAP: 2.6

**EAP enrolment is
a predictor of
first year GPA
after controlling
for demographic
and academic
variables**

Retention to Second Year

Bivariate relationship (does not control for other factors)

Universities

n=13,003

EAP: 86.0%

No EAP: 82.7%

**EAP enrolment is
a predictor of
retention after
controlling for
demographic and
academic
variables**

Impacts

Students

EAP program is an investment in their long-term success at the institution

Institutions

EAP program has real financial impacts due to increased retention

Sector

Clear evidence of positive academic outcomes to tell a collective story

Future Research

- What makes these programs so successful in improving the academic outcomes of international students?
- Do these programs have similar impacts for all international students or are there differences across subgroups?
- How can the study findings be used to guide quality improvements in EAP programs?
- How does EAP attendance affect longer-term academic outcomes and non-academic outcomes such as confidence, satisfaction, and belonging?
- What can institutions learn from each other?

Beyond the Cut Score

Associating Long-Term International Student Success with Language Pathway Program Outcomes

**Bruce Russell, University of
Toronto**

Languages Canada Conference
March 13, 2026

Investigating Longitudinal Success

Most predictive validity studies only look at first-year GPA. This study tracked student performance across an entire four-year undergraduate lifecycle.

Multilevel modeling

$$\tau_1 = \mu_{1j} + \gamma_{1j}(\mu_{+1}, \gamma_{1j})$$

$$\beta_2 = \rho_{01} \gamma_{2j} [\gamma_1, \gamma_2 [p_1 + \beta_{1j} + \gamma_{1j}(\rho_1, \omega_1)]$$

$$\gamma_m = \mu_{0m} \sigma_{R^2} + \beta_{1LL+a} [\gamma_3, \delta_{1j} + \beta_u]$$

$$= \Delta_{01} \left[\beta_{1j} \left(\frac{n}{a} \right)^2 \left(\beta_{1j} - \beta_{miss} \right) \right]$$



The Sample: 799 conditionally admitted English as an Additional Language (EAL) students.

The Timeline: 7 cohorts (2010–2016) tracked annually for 4 years until graduation.

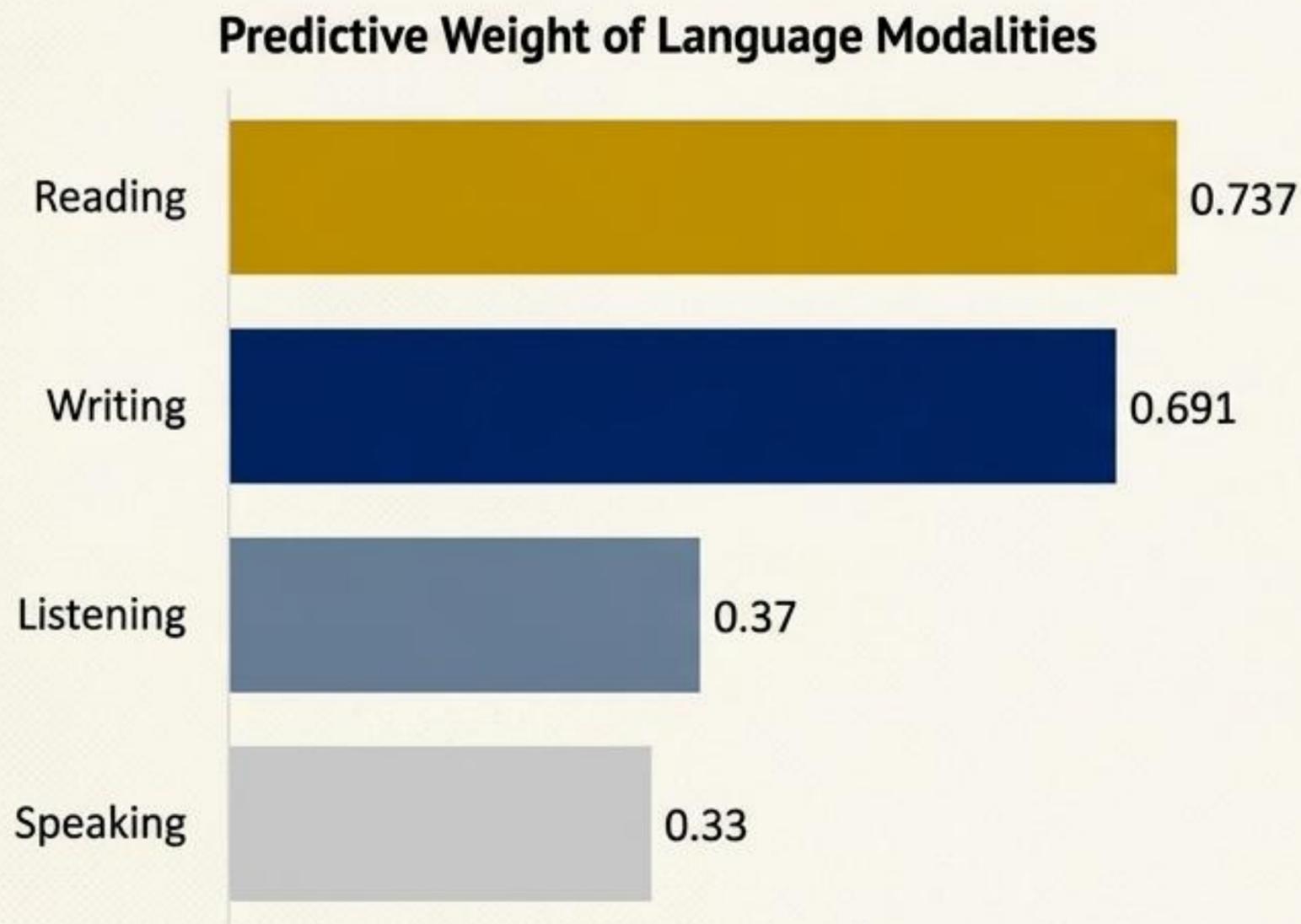


The Method:

Multilevel Modelling (MLM) was used to partition intra-student and inter-student variance, accommodating for missing data and capturing the true non-linear trajectory of academic growth.

The Power of Reading and Writing

When analysing IELTS subtest scores against Year 1 GPA, not all language skills carry equal predictive weight.



Receptive Dominance: Reading subtest scores explain the most variance in first-year GPA and long-term trajectory.

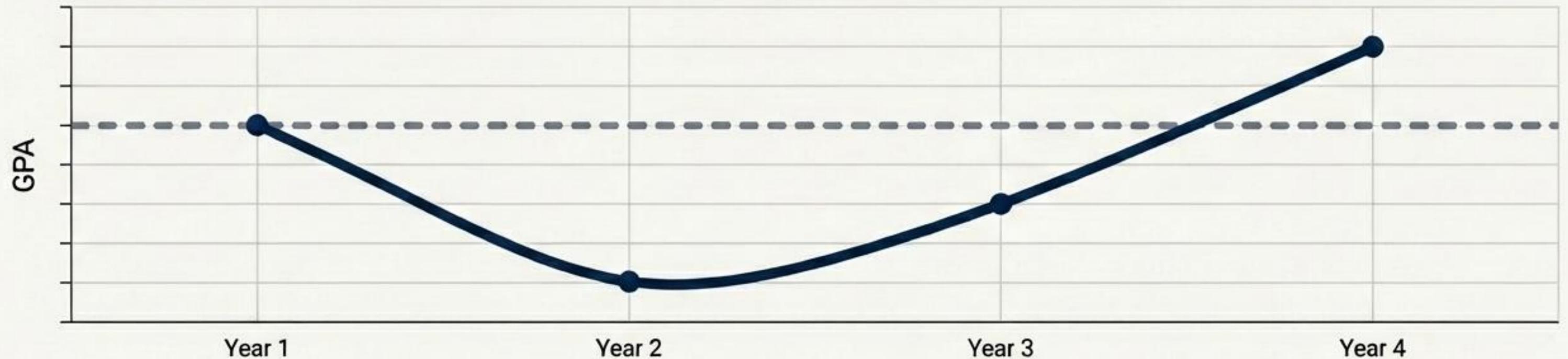
Productive Alignment: Writing scores also show a strong association with early academic performance. Reading and Writing scores explained approximately 13% of the variance in year 1 GPA.

Strategic Mandate:

Compensatory admission models (where high speaking/listening scores mask low reading/writing scores) put students at a distinct academic disadvantage in their first year.

The Year 2 Dip and 'Catch-Up' Trajectory

Academic performance for EAL students is rarely a straight line.



Inter

The Non-Linear Curve

On average, student GPA drops in Year 2 before recovering in Year 3 and peaking in Year 4.

Closing the Gap

Students entering with lower initial reading scores and lower EAP outcomes struggle initially but exhibit a steeper growth rate over time. They catch up to their peers, proving that early academic struggles are a temporary hurdle, not a permanent ceiling.

EAP Outcomes Outperform Standardised Tests

Standardised language tests offer a snapshot of proficiency, but a rigorous EAP programme provides a sustained measure of academic resilience.



Stronger Association

EAP programme outcomes (specifically the GPA achieved in the credit-bearing humanities course) explain a significantly larger amount of variance in Year 1 GPA **(31%)** than language test scores alone. **(13%)**

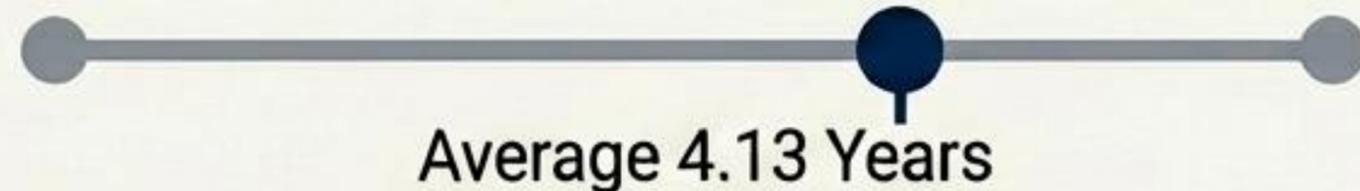
Construct Alignment

EAP coursework demands authentic academic behaviours—extended writing, critical reading, and discipline-specific vocabulary—making it a stronger predictor of early university success.

The Ultimate Goal is Graduation

Admissions policies focus on getting students in the door, but the true institutional goal is getting them across the stage.

72.5% Graduation Rate



Higher EAP programme outcomes are associated with a higher probability of graduating, and graduating in fewer academic sessions.

	EAP Outcomes	IELTS Scores
Increases Probability of Graduating	✓	✗
Speeds Up Degree Timeline	✓	✗

The EAP Impact: Higher EAP programme outcomes are significantly associated with a higher probability of graduating, and graduating in fewer academic sessions.

The IELTS Disconnect: Standardised language test scores do not share this relationship. Higher test scores do not statistically increase a student's likelihood of graduating or the speed at which they complete their degree.

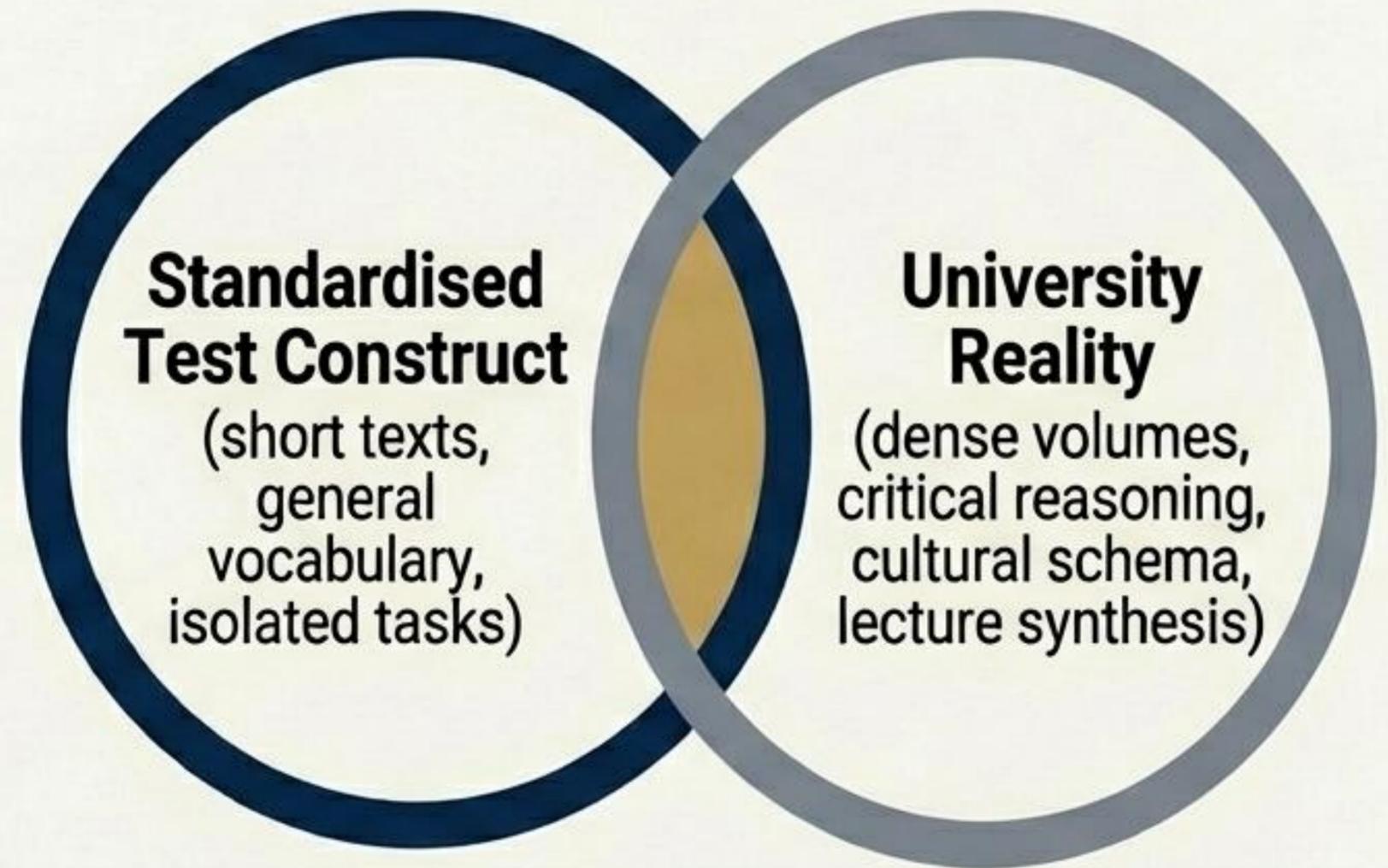
The Construct Disconnect

Why might EAP outcomes predict long-term success better than test scores?

Cognitive Complexity: Standardised test items often lack the higher-order critical skills and global reading strategies required in degree programmes.

Sociocultural Reality: University study requires schema activation, understanding culturally specific concepts, and navigating distinct disciplinary expectations.

Real-World Integration: EAP programmes force students to synthesise language and content simultaneously, bridging the gap between basic proficiency and actual academic performance.



THANK YOU!

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Measuring the Academic Impact of Public EAP: Evidence from the University of Ottawa

Presented by: Evan Lavoie, Manager, Centre for Language Learning

ILOB | OLBI

Institut des langues officielles et du bilinguisme
Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute



uOttawa

Data-Informed Academic Pathways

University of Ottawa

- Since 2015, we have tracked the academic outcomes of students entering through our language pathway.
- We examine:
 - GPA (first-year after 15 units)
 - % of cohort academically at risk (first-year after 15 units)
 - Retention rates into second year and graduation
- We use this evidence to:
 - Inform programming and policy
 - Support institutional advocacy
 - Demonstrate contribution to student success to key stakeholders

Impact ESL Writing Courses on First-Year GPA

Student Affairs, 2018 n = 1221 International Students

What We Looked At:

- 0, 1, or 2 ESL writing courses
- Outcome: First Year GPA

What We Found:

- No writing course: **5.08**
- One course: **5.63**
- Two courses: **5.46** (+0.4 to +0.55 difference for students who took at least one writing course)

Important Note:

- Only two variables were modelled
- Some faculty subgroups small
- First-year GPA only

Key Takeaway:

First-year writing coursework is linked to nearly a half-point GPA increase.

Does Starting ESL Level Predict First-Year GPA?

Student Affairs, 2019 n = 529 International Students

What We Looked At:

- Compared intakes requiring **42, 28, and 14** weeks of language training
- We then compared first-year GPA.
- We also considered:
 - Enrollment in first-year ESL writing course
 - Final EAP grade
 - Home faculty

What Actually Made a Difference:

- Performance in the EAP program
- Taking at least one ESL writing course
- Faculty of study

What We Found:

- Average First-Year GPA
 - **42 weeks** → **5.01**
 - **28 weeks** → **5.24**
 - **14 weeks** → **5.36**
- Entry-level differences were small and not meaningful.
- Students performed similarly regardless of starting level.

Key Takeaway:

Starting level alone does not predict first-year GPA. Students perform comparably regardless of entry level.

Research Into Retention and Graduation Outcomes: Student Affairs, 2022 n = 370 EAP students/1147 non-EAP students

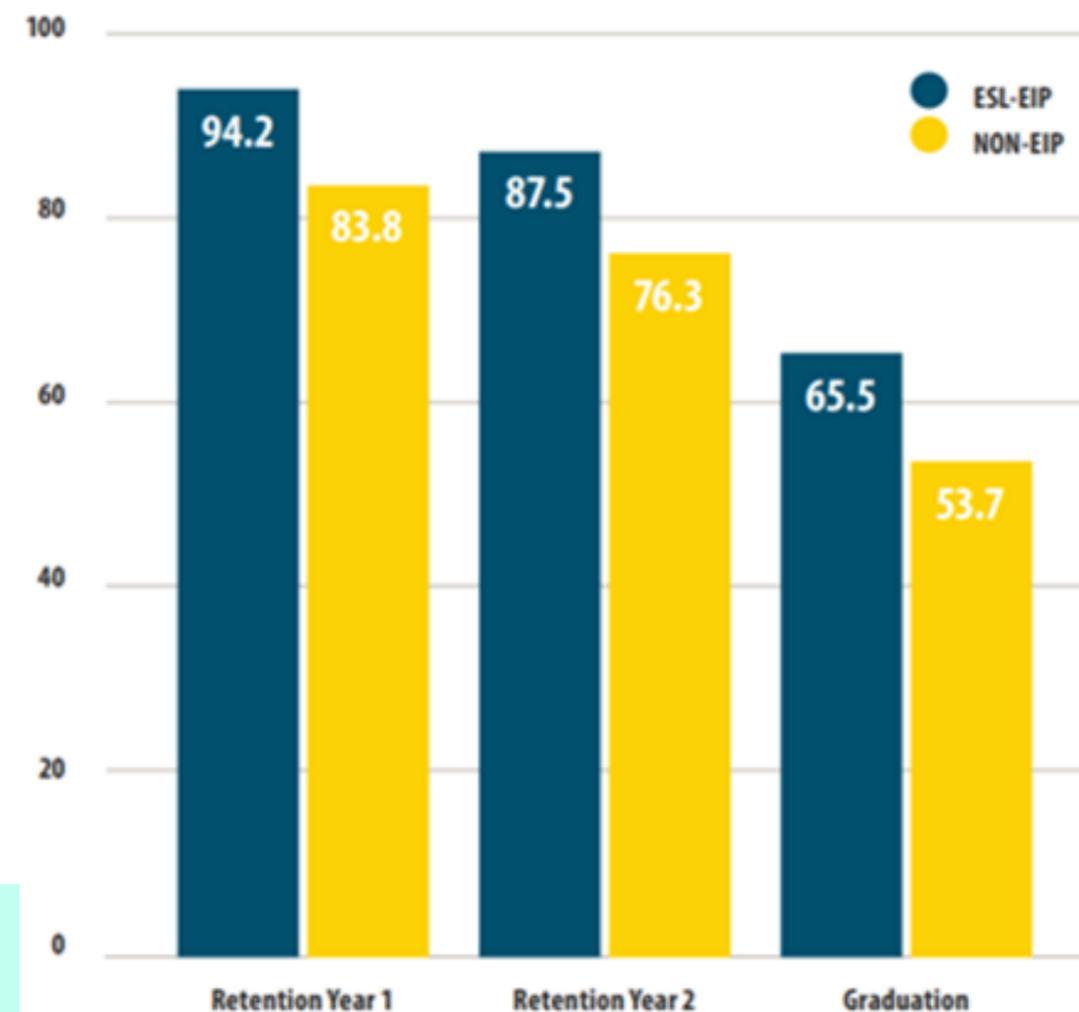
Retention Advantage:

- **Year 1 Retention:**
94.2% for EAP students / 83.8% for non-EAP students
- **Year 2 Retention**
87.5% for EAP students / 76.3% for non-EAP students

Graduation Outcomes:

- **Graduation Rate (Year 5):**
65.5% for EAP students / 53.7% for non-EAP students

EAP students are 12% more likely to graduate within the expected timeframe compared to international peers who did not complete EAP.



Institutional Research on Academic Outcomes for Public Sector EAP Students

Corinne Whitney

Manager – English Language Studies

Institutional Research Reports at Georgian College

English for Academic Purposes

Program Assessment Report (PAR) – five-year deep review

EAP Outcomes Report (Specialized) – most relevant

Annual Program Quality Report (APQR) – annual dashboards, pilot participant

Challenges

Where Traditional Metrics Misalign with Pathway Programs

Labour Market Demands Not Applicable

Metrics simply don't apply to EAP.

APQR labour-market info not available because no relevant NOC codes tied to program.

Not poor performance/metric misalignment.

Market Share/Conversion Misrepresents Purpose

Program demand metrics (in PAR) – give the illusion of poor demand.

EAP is not a competitive choice-based program – it is a pathway, not a destination.

Give the illusion of poor demand.

Employment and Graduate Satisfaction KPIs

Either read '0%', 'n.a.', or fluctuate due to small sample sizes—sometimes only 10 respondents.

Gives the impression of instability or low performance when, in fact, the metrics simply don't apply to EAP's mandate.

Metrics that Work!

Where the Data Does Show EAP's Impact

High Academic Success

- 91%+ pass rate
- Consistently above credential benchmark
- EAP students perform well academically

Strong Post EAP Grad Rate

- EAP students graduate from subsequent programs at a rate of nearly 76%.
- Significantly higher than students who meet language requirements through other avenues.

Broad Program Mobility

- EAP students successfully transition into health, technology, business, hospitality, community studies, and more.
- Breadth of transitions underscores EAP's value not just to one school, but to the entire college.

Metrics That Do Work and Match the Mission

Consider how we might update and modernize our reporting:

My Wish List - metrics aligned to

- readiness indicators
- language progression
- pathway uptake
- time-to-credential
- subsequent GPA
- retention
- long term graduation outcomes

Continue championing national, sector-wide research on EAP outcomes and broaden participation across the field.

Experience

 **Georgian**

ACCELERATE
YOUR SUCCESS



Discussion Q & A



**IMPACT OF
EAP and FAP PROGRAMS**



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Thank you!
Merci!



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