

Item 10I: ELT

Updates from the EAP sector

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) & BALEAP related

Dr Alex Ding

The advent of the Coronavirus has caused and will continue to cause profound problems and challenges to the EAP sector.

- (i) Colleagues are in the process of transforming f2f EAP programmes to online provision with little or no time to fully understand the affordances and constraints of online learning. This is being done rapidly with a lead in time of possibly only a week or two to prepare. BALEAP members have shown considerable solidarity through sharing ideas and experiences and hosting online sessions to support all practitioners.
- (ii) Many universities, but not all, have decided to run summer preessional courses online. Again, this requires a great deal of work to transform proven f2f programmes into effective online provision. This often represents the equivalent of hundreds of hours of teaching materials being transformed to online materials and tasks.
- (iii) Many colleagues rely on summer preessionals for income and the situation with student inscriptions remains very volatile. One particular challenge will be employing and supporting temporary/fixed term tutors working from home.
- (iv) Another aspect that is of concern is related to online student assessment for English language entry tests. IELTS is the dominant test but many centres are closed and when they reopen there will be a significant backlog in applications which, in turn, will impact undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment to university courses for the next academic year. Another issue is emerging, where some universities are considering alternative English language tests for students which are not secure and/or are not a reliable indicator of academic language proficiency.
- (v) There is likely to be significant reputational damage to UK universities internationally due to documented racist attacks on international students and the perception that the UK government has responded poorly to the outbreak of the virus.
- (vi) There are also serious concerns regarding the well-being of international students stranded in university accommodation and without the usual network of family and friends.
- (vii) It should be noted that the EAP community has been extremely generous in supporting each other and has demonstrated solidarity and collegiality.

From English UK:

I have no news from this sector and know this sector less well. However, the impact of the Coronavirus is likely to be very significant. Many students come to the UK not only to develop their language skills but also for cultural reasons. The appeal of online alternatives for students will be less than the EAP sector and the traditionally busy summer language schools will be empty in all likelihood. This will have a serious impact on the teachers working in this sector and possibly lead to unemployment and closure of schools etc.