



**The Efficacy of Final Examination and Course Assignments in Assessing Students
Overall Achievement for The Academic Writing Course in UTAR**

Charlene Odelia Francis

2004964

SUPERVISOR: Puan Nurullashkeen Binti Mohd Anis

UALZ 3023 - FYP2 REPORT

**SUBMITTED IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) ENGLISH EDUCATION
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

JANUARY TRIMESTER 2024

APPROVAL SHEET

This research paper attached hereto, entitled The Efficacy of Final Examination and Course Assignments in Assessing Students Overall Achievement for The Academic Writing Course in UTAR prepared and submitted by Charlene Odelia Francis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Education is hereby accepted.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the efficacy of final examination and course assignments in assessing students' overall achievement in the Academic Writing course at UTAR. Through a comprehensive examination of assessment methods, including final examination and course assignments, this research aims to identify the strength and limitation of each approach in accurately gauging students' proficiency in academic writing. A mixed method approach was conducted among 100 participants from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Kampar Campus). Questions were sent out through Google Form having a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions. In close-ended questions it was divided into 3 parts namely, Demographic information, self-assessment and exam performance and open-ended questions has one-part asking students' opinion how the Academic Writing course. The findings found that there is a positive sentiment towards the course, with many expressing satisfaction and perceived improvements in writing skills. However, concerns arise regarding their efficacy in enhancing writing skills especially in the context of final examination. Moving on, addressing these concerns and possibly refining assessment strategies could further enhance the effectiveness of the Academic Writing course in meeting students' needs and goals.

DECLARATION

I declare that the contents of this paper are solely the product of my own effort. Proper recognition has been provided in the references for all sources that has been referred.

Name: Charlene Odelia Francis

Student ID: 2004964

Signed: Charlene

Date: 6th May 2024

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research progressed smoothly because of the help and encouragement from various individuals. Therefore, I take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who supported me throughout this research journey. First and foremost, I am deeply thankful to my supervisor, Puan Nurullashkeen Binti Mohd Anis, for her unwavering, guidance, invaluable insight and continuous support throughout every stage for this research. Her expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the direction quality of this research. I would also wish to express my appreciation to my friends for their assistance and unwavering support along the way. Lastly, I am profoundly grateful to my family for their support.

CONTENTS

APPOVAL SHEET	2
ABSTRACT	3
DECLARATION FORM	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	5
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 Background of Study.....	10
1.2 Statement of Problem	10
1.3 Research Questions	11
1.4 Research Objectives	11
1.5 Significant of Study	11
1.6 Definition of Key Terms	12
1.6.2 Academic Writing	12
1.6.2.1 Assignment	12
1.6.2.2. Assessment	13
1.6.2.3 Achievement	13
1.7 Limitation and Scope of study	13
1.8 Summary	14

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction.....	15
2.2	Related Theories.....	15
2.2.1	Importance of Writing	15
2.2.2	Nature of Academic Writing.....	16
2.2.3	Why is Academic Writing in a second language challenging.....	16
2.3	Related studies.....	17
2.4	Summary.....	19

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction.....	20
3.2	Research Design.....	20
3.3	Sample.....	20
3.4	Instrumentation.....	21
3.4.1	Quantitative data analysis.....	21
3.5	Data collection.....	21
3.6	Data analysis.....	22
3.7	Summary	22

CHAPTER FOUR : ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1	Introduction.....	23
4.2	Demographic Information of Participants.....	24-25
4.3	Universities students opinions on Academic Writing course.....	26

4.3.1	Overall satisfaction with the Academic Writing course.....	26
4.3.2	Opinions on improvisation of writing skills.....	27
4.3.3	How equipped are you with writing skills after taking the course.....	28
4.4	Exam Performance.....	29
4.4.1	Rating of overall final examination performances.....	29
4.4.2	Level of anxiety during final examination.....	30
4.4.3	Students' agreement to a statement.....	31
4.5	Students' opinion on Final Exam and Continuous Assessment	32
4.5.1	Students who want only Continuous Assessment as a form of Assessment.....	32
4.5.2	Students opinions on Final Examination for Academic Writing Course.....	32
4.5.3	Evaluation of assignment.....	34
4.6	Conclusion	36

CHAPTER FIVE : DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1	Introduction.....	37
5.2	Discussion.....	37
5.2.1	Discussion based on Collected Data for Research Objective 1	37
5.2.2	Discussion on Collected Data for Research Objective 2.....	39
5.3	Limitation.....	40
5.4	Recommendation	41
5.5	Conclusion.....	41
	References.....	43

Appendix A – Demographic Information

Appendix B - Self – Assessment

Appendix C – Exam performance

Appendix D – Open ended question

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter will discuss on the background of study, the statement of problem, research questions and objectives, definition of key terms, scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of Study

Academic writing is characterized by its formal, technical and impersonal nature. It avoids colloquial language, such as contraction or informal terms and emphasizes objectivity, focusing on facts, ideas and concepts (The University of Sydney, n.d.). Given its significance, proficiency in academic writing is an essential skill for all university students (Leli, 2020). Enhancing academic writing skills is essential for university students and researchers as they navigate tasks such as crafting technical reports, formulating research proposals, seeking scientific scholarships and publishing findings in conference proceedings and journals. In UTAR, as students in the English Education study program students are required to take an Academic Writing course that is set by the faculty. This is because students expected to have the skills in expressing themselves through plausible in English Language (Leli, 2019). Based on the course plan, which is available in UTAR Portal; the students are required to accomplish quiz, assignment 1, assignment 2 and sit for their final examination.

1.2 Statement of Problem

While several studies have explored various aspects of academic writing effectiveness, such as coherence and cohesion and students' perceptions of ESP (English for specific purposes) academic writing skills, a significant gap remains in understanding whether final exams and assignments comprehensively evaluate the range of skills offered in academic

writing such as analytical reasoning, research proficiency and adept communication. Other past studies on academic writing skills also exclude aspects like critical thinking, research aptitude, and effective communication which are rather important aspects in learning the subject.

If the academic writing course were to be treated as a common subject where the only aim is to complete the assignments and final examinations, the actual skill of writing and communicating formally is abandoned and a valuable skill will be overlooked. In future discourses, the formality of academics can be overruled, and specific purposeful writing will lose its significance and value among future academicians. Hence, it is crucial for tertiary students to learn and master the academic writing skill for their future discourses and the course syllabus itself should give students ample space to learn and evaluate their own skills.

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) How are the final examinations and assignments evaluating the range of academic writing skills of UTAR students?
- 2) How do the students learn the academic writing skill through the course assignments and final examinations as individuals?

1.4 Research Objectives

- 1) To study the efficiency of final examinations and assignments in evaluating academic writing skills.
- 2) To examine the individual academic writing skill development of students through the course assignments and final examinations.

1.5 Significant of Study

This study is significant because it has the ability to offer insightful information to academia and educational institutions, particularly UTAR. By this study, lecturers can improve their teaching strategies by having a better understanding of how the components and methods

of UTAR's academic writing program work together to enhance cohesive writing skills. Numerous studies have delved into aspects of effective academic writing, including coherence, cohesion, and students' perceptions of English for specific purposes (ESP) academic writing skills. However, there is a notable gap in understanding whether final exams and assignments thoroughly assess the full spectrum of academic writing skills, encompassing analytical reasoning, research proficiency, and proficient communication. During final examinations, students go through crippling anxiety and pawn their mental health just to answer the exam questions. However, throughout the course group assignments and the final examination is assigned to work on, but the degree of academic writing skills that the students gain is still unclear. This makes the rationale of the course questionable.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Academic Writing

In order to socialize students into the language of subject and discipline in universities, academic writing is essential (Pineteh, 2013). Academic writing is defined as a written project or task that is given to students in academic settings and is a crucial component of teaching and learning in higher education. University students must actively develop their academic writing, which implies that they must acquire particular academic skills (Montaner-Villalba, 2021).

1.6.2 Assignment

An Assignment is a task or piece of academic work that offers students the opportunity to learn, practice and showcases their attainment of learning objectives. It serves as evidence for teachers that students have met these objectives, and its output can be evaluated through sensory perception, such as observation, reading or tasting. Assignment may centre on prototype, engaging in a specific process like research or group collaboration, and

demonstrating individual skills or competencies such as professional or communication skills (Ulum, 2020).

1.6.3 Assessment

According to Martha L.A. Stassen et al., assessment is delineated as “the systematic gathering and examination of data aimed at enhancing students learning” (Stassen et al., 2001, pg.5). This definition encapsulates the fundamental role of assessment in the educational process. It empowers educators to gauge the efficacy of their teaching methods by correlating students’ achievement with predefined learning goals. Consequently, instructors can formalize successful instructional strategies while refining or discarding ineffective ones, thereby enhancing the overall quality of their teaching practices (Fisher, 2017).

1.6.4 Achievement

Academic achievement signifies the level of success attained in fulfilling particular objectives targeted within educational settings, notably in schools, colleges and universities. Education institutions primarily establish cognitive objectives that span various subjects, such as critical thinking, or encompass the acquisition of knowledge and comprehension within specific intellectual domains like numeracy, literacy, science and history (Steinmayr, 2014).

1.7 Limitations and Scope of study

The possible limitations that are recognized by the author are sampling bias, self-report bias and single institution focus. Since the study is cantered around UTAR, the findings might not be applicable to other educational institutions with different academic writing programs, student demographics, or curricular structures. Moreover, participants’ desire to show

themselves favourably or their subjective perception of their events may have an impact on survey responses and interview testimonies. Moreover, it is possible that the study's participants will not accurately represent the overall student population or maybe they could have unique traits that affect their responses. It will be too generalized for the findings. Lastly, this research only focuses on students who have taken the subject beforehand only

1.8 Summary

To recapitulate, proficiency in formal and technical writing is essential for university students. The problem statement emphasizes a lack of clarity regarding whether final exams and assignments effectively assess fundamental academic writing skills, such as analytical reasoning, research proficiency, and skilled communication. The research focuses on exploring how academic writing skills of UTAR students are evaluated in final exams and assignments, along with understanding individual learning during course activities. The objectives include assessing the effectiveness of evaluations in gauging academic writing skills and scrutinizing individual skill development through assignments and exams. The study's significance lies in providing valuable insights to UTAR and academia, aiding instructors in refining teaching strategies by addressing gaps in understanding the comprehensiveness of academic writing assessments. However, acknowledged limitations encompass potential sampling and self-report biases, as well as the single-institution focus, limiting the generalizability of findings beyond UTAR.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter encloses the Importance of Writing, Nature of Academic Writing, Challenges of Academic Writing and past studies that prevails the current state of knowledge in the current state of interest. Lastly the contribution of the past researches in the Academic Writing field is also studied.

2.2 Related Theories

2.2.1 Importance of Writing

Mastering writing skills is indispensable in today's professional landscape, spanning across various professions that heavily rely on documentation. In the contemporary workplace, possessing adept writing skills is not merely advantageous but often considered a prerequisite. The business realm places a premium on individuals with strong writing skills, deeming them essential contributors to corporate communication. Consequently, prospective employees are expected to demonstrate proficiency in writing, positioning those with such skills as highly sought-after assets in the job market (Lee, S., & Schmidgall, J, 2020).

Furthermore, the acquisition of excellent writing skills is imperative in the context of tertiary education. In the academic sphere, writing transcends the mere arrangement of words, it serves as a medium for meaningful communication. Underscores that academic writing involves a nuanced understanding of the systematic development of ideas and interactive processes, necessitating a solid foundation in general writing abilities. Hence, cultivating strong writing skills not only enhances academic performance but also equips individuals with a vital tool for effective expression and communication. Writing serves as a catalyst for creativity, imagination and deeper understanding. It is a cognitive process that engages the brain in organizing thoughts into coherent written form. To elaborate, writers must exercise

imagination and creativity to articulate their thoughts with precision and clarity. In essence, writing is not just a mechanical task, it is a dynamic thinking process that fosters intellectual growth and expression (Lee, S., & Schmidgall, J, 2020).

2.2.2 Nature of Academic Writing

This perspective asserted that proficiency in academic writing relied heavily on versatile general skills. Faculty frequently highlight skills like audience awareness, logical organization, focused paragraph development, clarity, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics in their interviews. It recognized the necessity for students to comprehend terminology specific to their academic disciplines. (Zhu,2004)

2.2.3 Why is academic writing in a second language challenging

Upon entering college, many ESL/EFL writers encounter challenges in academic writing due to limited prior formal instruction. High schools and tertiary institutions often offer generic writing courses that fail to address students' individual needs or prepare them for discipline-specific writing. A college student expressed frustration, noting that this writing course focused on essential components but lacked guidance on improving academic expressive ability. Some erroneously link high English proficiency with strong academic writing skills, yet improvements in general language proficiency don't necessarily translate to enhanced academic writing proficiency.

Bhatia (2004) distinguishes between textual and generic competence, highlighting the importance of academic skills like using conventions, referencing sources, quoting, note-taking planning and structuring paragraphs. ESL/EFL students commonly grapple with grammatical

inaccuracies, reflecting low English proficiency, while native English speakers may struggle with applying academic writing rules within a specific discipline or for publication.

For non-native English speakers, challenges extend beyond generic competence, encompassing language features, rhetorical structure, and socio-cultural dynamics. Bilingual or multilingual writers often employ a uniform approach across languages, hindering their ability to meet academic writing standards

2.3 Related studies

A study was done to evaluate the application of coherence and cohesion in academic writing made by third-year English education program students. To collect data, the researchers used document analysis and interviews to meet the objectives of the study. The study's findings indicated that many students still found it challenging to put their ideas together in a comprehensible manner. The results of the students' comprehension of coherence and cohesiveness revealed that 59% of them needed to improve, while 27% and 14% of them were doing a good job but could do better. It is conceivable that students' inability to write ideas clearly and correctly can be explained. According to the interview results, there were three causes for this. These include a lack of enthusiasm, a brief lesson, and prior English proficiency. These factors interfere with pupils' ability to write academically, causing them to express concepts through their writing crudely. As a result, While the students were writing the argument, coherence and coherent abilities diminished (Leli, 2020).

Moreover, a study was carried out among tertiary students to identify the types of issues in the academic writings of the students and their potential causes (Dema, 2020). The college students were sampled using purposive sampling methods and they were given a questionnaire to identify the major academic writing issues among them. Upon the data collection, the most

prominent problems identified were plagiarism issues, paraphrasing and grammatical errors as well as spelling and punctuation problems. Along with the questionnaire, the researcher also conducted a distinctive survey to obtain the potential causes which turned out to be, the lack of intensive writing activities, time constraints, lazy attitudes and the students being unaware of crucial information and required skills (Dema, 2020). At the last stage, the researcher had given some suggestions to improve these problems to both the instructors and the students. As stated the study had identified the academic writing problem and it also included some suggestions but there was no form of implementation in the study. The researcher did not conduct any measures to determine the effectiveness of the proposed suggestions. It remains vivid that the efficacy of the suggested methods is still unclear.

A study done by Ayman Ankawi (2023) utilized an analytical descriptive method to determine the challenges in learning the academic writing course (Ayman Ankawi, 2023). The main sample includes a group of 50 post-graduates who are learning academic writing courses. The post-graduates were given a survey to determine their most prominent challenges in learning the course. In academic writing course learning, some of the problems faced by the students were differentiating spoken and written English, difficulty in drafting before writing, not knowing the key aspects to effective writing and lastly preventing plague phrases and words (Ayman Ankawi, 2023). As the challenges are quite clear, this study does not include any form of suggestions or improvements to curb the difficulties yielded. Beyond that, the effectiveness learning is also left unanswered.

Furthermore, in another study, 82 postgraduate students were sampled to conduct quantitative and qualitative research. In the study, the postgraduate students were asked to identify their challenges in Academic Writing and their respective self-found coping strategies. The research yielded two types of challenges namely, sentence level and discourse level writing problems. The students stated that they used google translation as one of their prominent coping

strategies. As stated, this study only focuses on the challenges in Academic Writing and limited coping strategies. Beyond that, the efficacy of the coping strategies are not explored leaving the study unbridged (Lin, 2021).

2.4 Summary

Mastering strong writing skills is indispensable in the professional world of academia, especially in the business field where it is considered a prerequisite for effective corporate communication. Academic writing, as highlighted by Zhu (2004), relies on versatile skills such as audience awareness and logical organization. However, challenges arise for ESL/EFL writers, stemming from limited prior formal instruction and generic writing courses that fail to address discipline-specific needs. Related studies point to difficulties in coherence, plagiarism, and grammatical errors, attributing these challenges to various factors, including a lack of intensive writing activities. The multifaceted nature of academic writing challenges is underscored by the need for tailored instructional approaches, as demonstrated by studies exploring coping strategies and the effectiveness of interventions in overcoming these challenges.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the research methodology employed in this study, which centres on assessing the efficiency of final examination and assignments in relation to the development of Academic Writing. It will delve into the research design, the selection of samples, and the instruments utilized. Additionally, this chapter will elaborate on the techniques used for data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research Design

This study employs quantitative research design that is deemed suitable for addressing the research questions as it allows the researchers thorough examination of the subject. The numerical data is derived from a survey questionnaire from UTAR students and document analysis of the course. This study is explanatory research because it examines the cause and effect of Academic Writing courses in UTAR students. Explanatory research is a type of research design that aims to clarify or provide explanations for observed phenomena. (Baskerville,R.,& Pries-Heje,J, 2010)

3.3 Sample

The study involves participants from two faculties, namely the Faculty of Arts and Science (FAS) and Faculty of Business and Finance (FBF) at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) Kampar Campus. Specifically, 100 undergraduate students majoring in various courses but mandated to undertake Academic Writing. To ensure a diverse and representative sample, the research adopts a simple random sampling technique. This approach as highlighted by Latpate., et al., (2021) is a prominent method for avoiding bias and augmenting the

representativeness of study outcomes, a critical consideration for drawing meaningful research conclusions

3.4 Instrumentation

Through utilizing quantitative methods, the relationship between the final exam and assignments in Academic Writing subject will be measured using Google form. The survey consists of a structured questionnaire administered to UTAR students who have taken the Academic Writing course. The questionnaire will include questions on the perceived Demographic Data, Self-Assessment of writing skills, Exam performance. To be specific the questionnaire will include two sections: section A will be close ended and section B would be open ended questions. In Section A it will be divided into 3 parts namely, demographic data 2 questions will be asked followed by Self- assessment 3 questions. Lastly for exam performance, 3 questions will be asked. Also in section B there will be 3 open ended questions.

3.4.1 Quantitative data analysis

Prior to analysis, the quantitative data acquired from the survey questionnaire will undergo a meticulous cleaning and screening process. This step aims to identify and rectify potential issues, such as missing data or outliers. The subsequent analysis will employ descriptive statistics, involving the calculation of mean and mode. This approach ensures a succinct summary of participants' responses. Comparison will be made between final exam and assignment outcomes of different faculty. The objective is to pinpoint that final examination does not correlate with assignments. Google form will serve as the primary tool for data analysis, enabling the creation of visual informative representations including charts and graphs; to enhance the clarity of the findings.

3.5 Data collection

The survey will be conducted using a Google Form, which allows for efficient and organized data collection. Participants can respond to the survey question online, and their responses will be automatically collected in a Google sheets spreadsheets.

3.6 Data analysis

The data collected will be manually analysed descriptively and thematically with the help of google form. The quantitative data collected through the survey will be analyzed using Google Form tools, providing descriptive statistics such as average, percentages and correlations to identify trends and relationship between final examinations and assignments. The researcher will utilize descriptive analysis. As cited by McCarthy, et al., (2019) descriptive analysis proves valuable in providing meaningful data visualization and identifying data preparation needs. Examination of survey responses will be used to generate a summary of key findings, including overall perception of program effectiveness, self-assessed writing skills, and exam performance will be done manually. Document analysis for the questionnaire can be subjected to thematic analysis. As Khokhar, et al.,(2020) mentioned, thematic analysis identifies the patterns used and coding them into themes for a clearer analysis. This involves identifying recurring themes, patterns and insights from the qualitative data, providing a deeper understanding of student experiences and instructor perspectives.

3.7 Summary

The study employs a mixed-method research methodology to comprehensively address its objective related to the academic writing course at UTAR. A quantitative approach, through a Google Form survey is utilized to gather data on students' perception of program effectiveness, self-assessment of writing skills, and exam performance. The survey responses will be subjected to both manual descriptive and thematic analyses, shedding light of program

effectiveness, self-assessed writing skills, and exam performance. Additionally, thematic analysis will be applied to document analysis, contributing to a holistic understanding of the academic writing course at UTAR.

CHAPTER FOUR : ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the results derived from both the survey and interview data, aiming to address the research question posed in this study. The findings are structured into four primary sections for clarity and coherence. Section A shows the demographic information of participants collected in the study. While section B illustrates UTAR undergraduate students' self- assessment of writing skills. Section C examines their overall final examination performance of the Academic Writing course. The last section demonstrates the perceived effectiveness of the program.

4.1 Demographic Information of Participants

This section explains the demographic information of the participants collected in the study. The demographic information includes the age and faculties of UTAR.

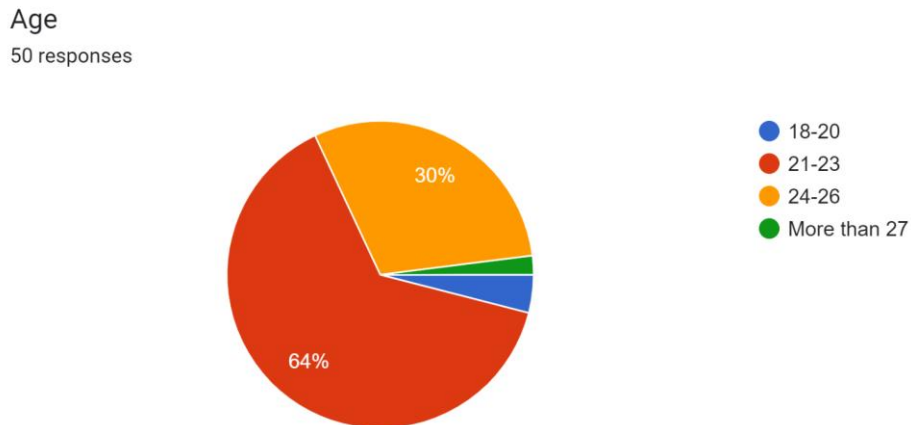


Figure 4.1.1: Age

According to Figure 4.1.1, the research sample included 32 students (64%) of age 21-23 whereas 15 students (30%) were aged 24-26. Moreover 2 students (4%) were aged 18-20. last but not least it was recorded 1 student (2%) were aged 27

Faculties
50 responses

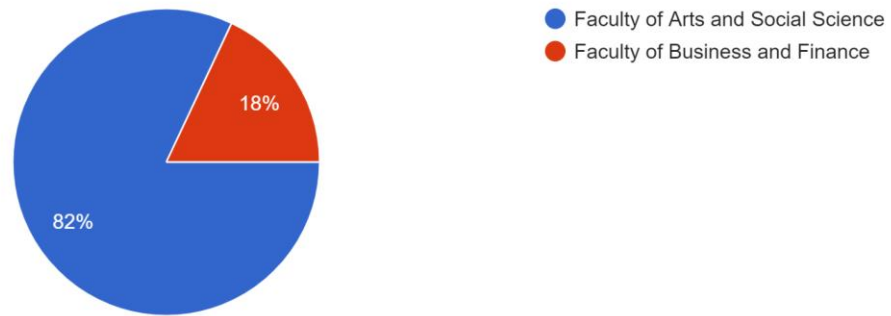


Figure 4.1.2: Faculties

Commonly, Academic Writing courses are taken by all the faculties in the university. However, for this particular survey only two faculties were emphasized due to the limitation faced by the researcher. Such as the Faculty of Business and Finance and Faculty of Arts and Social Science. According to the figure above, 41 (82%) of participants are from the Faculty of Arts and Social Science whereas 9 (18%) are from the Faculty of Business and Finance.

4.2 Universities students' opinions on Academic Writing course

From 1- 5, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with the Academic Writing course?

50 responses

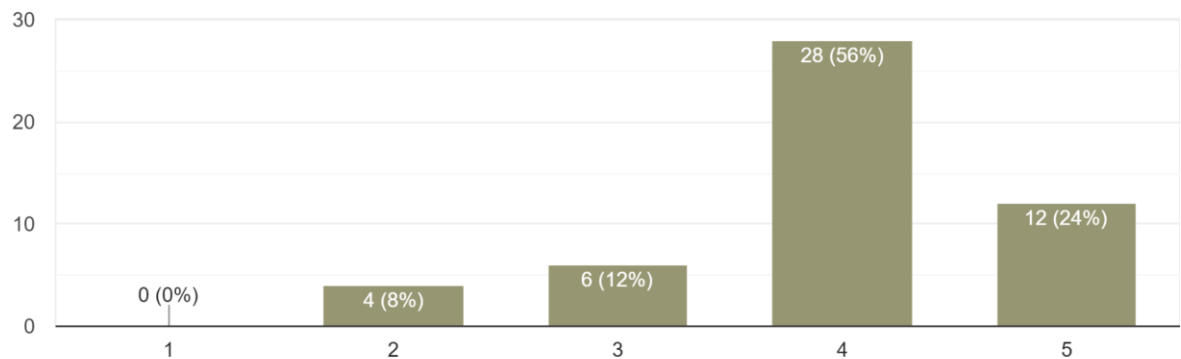


Figure 4.2.1: Overall satisfaction with the Academic Writing course

According to the figure above, 50 participants had a variety of opinions. The score ranges 1 being very dissatisfied, 2 being dissatisfied, 3 being neutral, 4 being satisfied and 5 being very satisfied. Therefore, from the survey it can be concluded 4(8%) of the students are not satisfied with the course. 6 (12%) of the students are neutral about the course. 28 (56%) of the students are satisfied with the Academic Writing course and 12 (24%) of the students are very satisfied with the course.

From 1-5, to which extent do you think the Academic Writing course has improved your ability to express your ideas through writing?

50 responses

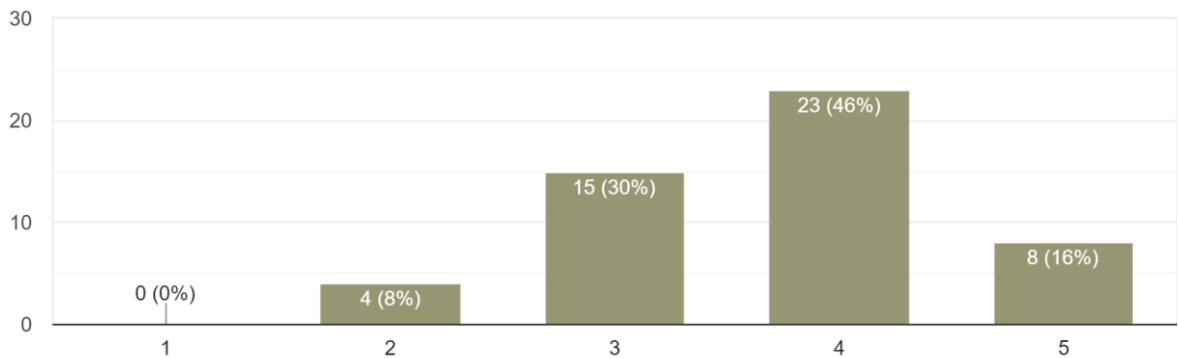


Figure 4.2.2: Opinions on improvisation of writing skills.

Based on the results curated, the score ranges 1 being very poor, 2 being poor, 3 being neutral, 4 being good while 5 being very good. 4 (8%) of the students have voted that their writing skills have been poor which means that they see little to no improvement. 15 (30%) students have voted for neutral which means they believe their writing ability has neither improved or did not improve at all. However, 23 (46%) students think that their writing skills have improved for the better. Moreover. On the other hand, 8 (16%) students have voted that their writing skills have been very good through this Academic Writing course.

On a scale of 1-5, how well are you equipped with writing skills after taking the course?

50 responses

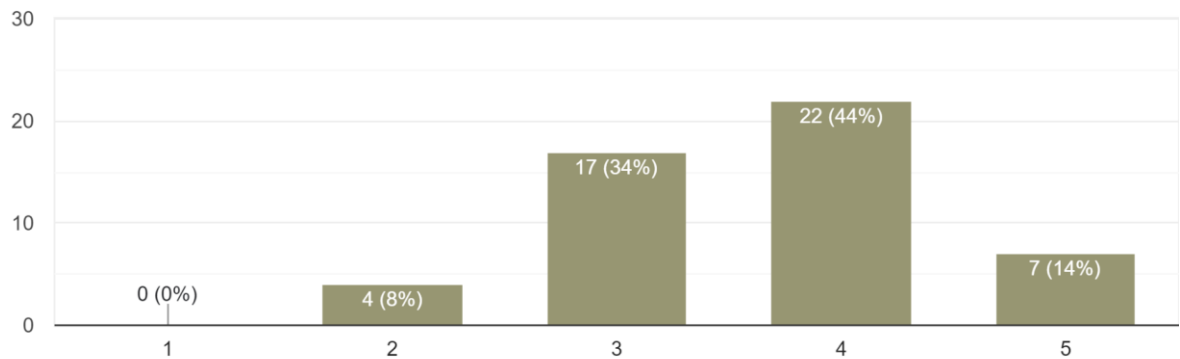


Figure 4.2.3: How equipped are you with writing skills after taking the course

The score ranges 1 being least equipped, 2 being less equipped, 3 being neutral, 4 being equipped while 5 being well equipped. From the results it can be seen that 4 (8%) of the students said that they are being less equipped with writing skills, 17 (34%) students voted for being neutral which means they were neither equipped well or not at all with their writing skills especially after taking this course. while the highest voting for being equipped counted with 22 (44%) students. Furthermore, Last but not least, 7 (14%) students agreed on being well equipped with writing skills after taking the Academic Writing course.

4.3 Exam Performances

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your overall performance in the final examination?

50 responses

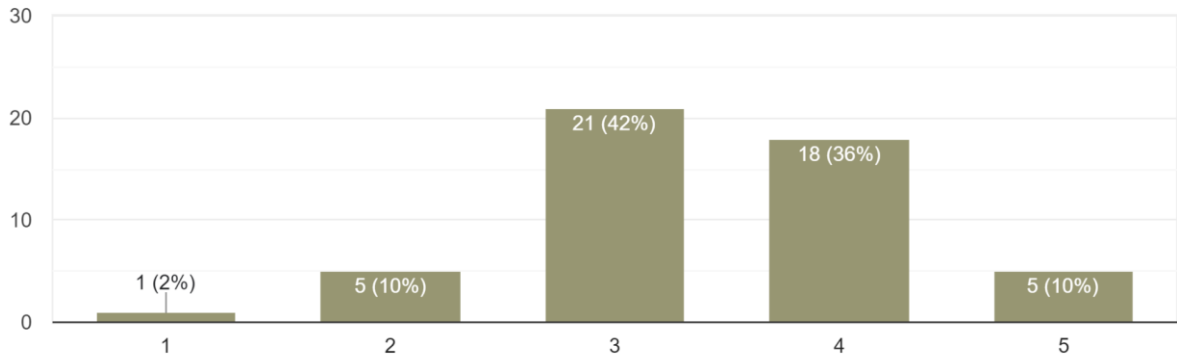


Figure 4.3.1: Ratings of overall final examination performances

The ratings range 1 being poor, 2 fair, 3 being good, 4 being very good while 5 being excellent. The results show on behalf of both faculties, 1(2%) student said they did poorly in their final examination. 5 (10%) students stated fairly well while. This variation in the results make sense when their anxiety levels were looked upon 21 (42%) students out of 50 of them said they did good in their final examination. Not only that, 18 (36%) and 5 (10%) said they believe they did very good and excellently for their final exam respectively.

On a scale of 1-5, how was your anxiety level during the final examination period?

50 responses

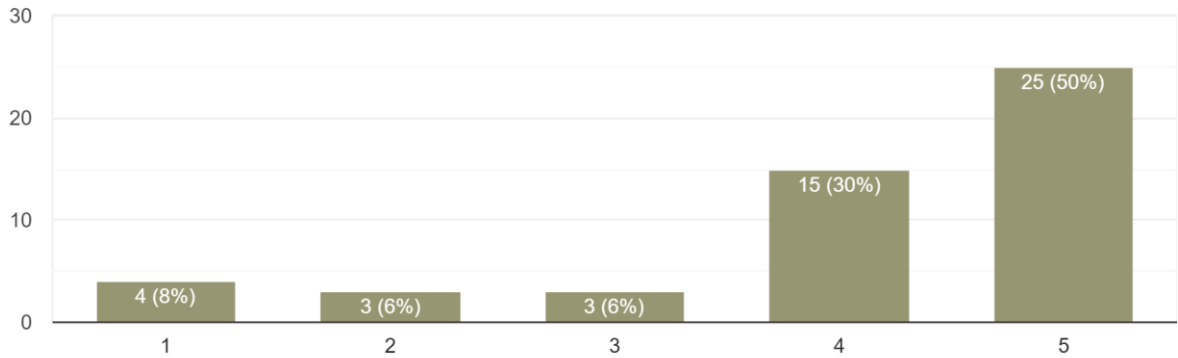


Figure 4.3.2: Level of anxiety during final examination

The levels range from 1 being low, 2 being below average, 3 being average, 4 being above average while 5 being high. Anxiety refers to a sensation of discomfort, feeling of fear and worries which can escalate from mild to severe (NHS, n.d). From the findings above, it can be concluded that 4 (8%) out of 50 students have said their anxiety levels are low during the examination period. 3 (6%) were having anxiety below average. 3 (6%) students' anxiety was average. 15 (30%) had anxiety above average. 25(50%) have agreed on experiencing anxiety on a high level. This survey was taken into account to demonstrate that students undergo high level of stress which most probably hindering them from their critical thinking skills

On a scale of 1-5, how well do you agree to this statement "Everything that has been taught was tested in final examination"

50 responses

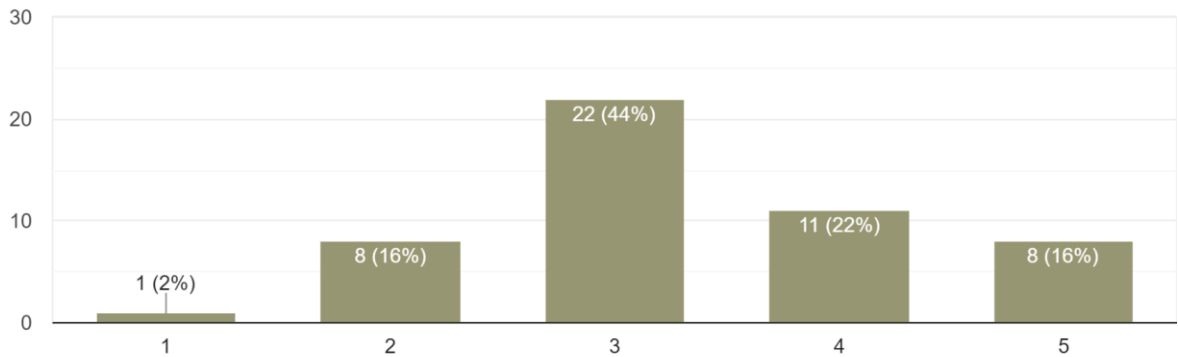


Figure 4.3.3: Students' agreement to a statement

The score ranges 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neutral, 4 agree while 5 strongly agree. 1(2 %) student strongly disagree to the statement. 8(16%) disagree to the statement while 22 (44%) students are neutral towards the statement. There were changes to the result when it came to agree and strongly agree which was 11 (22%) students agreed to the statement and 8(16%) of them strongly agree to the statement above.

4.4 Students' opinions on Final Exam and Continuous Assessment

4.4.1 Students who want only continuous assessment as a form of assessment.

In order to find out the effectiveness of final examination and course assignments on students three main questions were asked. One of the questions was “do you think that the assignment given assesses your Academic Writing skills. This question was asked to seek answers on determining whether continuous assessment benefiting UTAR students. It was found that Participant 1 and 2 agreed to the statement.

“Yes. Because we were tested upon our ideas, arrangements of arguments, and how to interpret a figure and transfer them into words. So I would say it assess well” Participant 9

“Yes, the assignments given were testing the skills well as they require us to write for specific academia domains” Participant 44

Although there were agreed statements there were also disagreements towards the questions. They mentioned that it does not focus on writing skills, it mostly focuses on APA citations and form of a message.

“No. because the assignments do not really focus on teaching us the Academic Writing skills.” Participant 10

“No. The assessment was not fully writing. It tested our skills on writing APA citations too” Participants 7

“No. As a business student, we should focus more on how to get a message to another accurately instead of the form of it” Participants 3

The responses given by the students reveals that assignments helped them to get better grades but not sharpen their writing skills. On the other hand, Faculty of Arts and Social Science students agreed to having assessment as a form of assessment because it provides opportunity to delve into variety of topics showcase understanding and communicate ideas through words.

4.4.2 Students opinions on final examination for Academic Writing course.

Another question that was asked “How well do you think that Academic Writing course has prepared you for the final examination?”. Respondents gave mixed answers towards this question nevertheless majority of them mention that they did not prefer final examination the answers were,

“It is very hard to measure because half of the things that were tested through assignments. For the most part, I studied by myself and the tutorials that was given were not the same as the final exams.” Participant 27

“it is a course that is beneficial to all the other courses not only for final exam but also throughout university time” Participant 49

The findings above indicated that final examinations do help the students but not to enhance their writing skills.

4.4.3 Evaluation of assignment

The last question was asked in this survey was “ Do you think that the assignment given during the course adequately assess your academic writing skills?” Majority of them agreed and gave reasons such as the assignments were tested on the arrangement of the ideas, the production of essays and how to write using visual aids.

“Yes, one of the assignment entitled “ writing with visuals” provided me the opportunity to learn how to analyse the data” Participant 36

“Yes, because we were tested upon our ideas, arrangements of arguments and how to interpret a figure and transfer them into words. So I would say it assess well.” Participant 47

“ Yes, I think it did as it allows me to really understand the structure and sequence on how I should really write the essays” Participant 50

*“Nonetheless, there were also opposed comments on how the course heavily focused on citations, the form and the group work makes them feel that they are losing marks”
Participant 29*

“Nope, if it was individual then yes but it was combined with other people, what if my skills are merged with them and they are assessed mistakenly for their mistakes” participant 38

“No, As a business students, we should focus more on how to get a message to another accurately instead of the form of it” Participant 18

“ No, maybe, the assessment was not fully writing. It tested out skills om writing APA citations too” Participant 22

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter presents comprehensive results from investigation UTAR undergraduates students’ perspectives on an Academic Writing course. The findings are structured into four sections. Firstly, demographic information reveals that most participants are aged between 21-23 and predominantly from the Faculty of Arts and Social Science. Secondly, opinions on the course indicate overall satisfaction, with a significant portion expressing satisfaction and improvement in writing skills. Thirdly, examination performance and anxiety level during exams are explored, showcasing a majority feeling adequately prepared and experiencing varying levels of anxiety. Lastly, opinions on the effectiveness of continuous assessment for its ability to assess understanding and communication skills, while course’s benefits, there are divergent opinion on its assessments methods and their effectiveness in enhancing writing skills, particularly concerning final examination

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the discussion of the study, limitations, recommendations and suggestions for future studies and an overall conclusion for this research will be analyzed.

5.2 Discussion

Through this research it was found that both objectives were achieved by getting students' perception on the Academic Writing course in UTAR.

5.2.1 Discussion based on Collected Data for Research Objective 1

Research objective 1: To study the efficacy of final examinations and assignments in evaluating academic writing skills.

To discuss the results of the first objective of this research, the participants gave positive feedback to all 6 questions. From the first question where it was asked about their overall satisfaction, the majority of them said they were satisfied. Through this result, it can be said that the students are aware of the importance of Academic Writing courses in their academic career (Tharwat EL-Sakran et al., 2017). The second question was based on how much the Academic Writing course has improved their writing skills and they voted that their writing

skills have improved. Studies have shown that students' comprehension is based on their individual interpretations of teaching and learning concepts. Specifically, how students perceive the nature of studying and learning significantly influences their understanding (Scheja, 2006; ELSakran & Mesanovic, 2012). The third question discusses how well the students are equipped with writing skills after taking the course. Writing is an essential skill for scientists and anyone engaged in task reliant on effective communication. Despite its importance, the writing process is inherently intricate, often posing significant challenges. Throughout this process, writers must consider various elements, including generating ideas, understanding their audience, and crafting suitable sentence structures (Demirel, 2011; Raimes, 1983; Wiratno, 2003;3). Majority of the students voted for being equipped with writing skills.

When it was asked to rate their final examination performances, almost 50% of the students said they did fairly good. According to Tharwat EL-Sakran et al. (2017), students are more likely to be motivated to learn when they perceive the course content as relevant. Based on the study done by Kumari et al. (2014), it was revealed that excessive stress can disrupt a student's preparation, concentration, and performance. It was also found that there is a strong correlation between examination stress and anxiety levels in college students. Notably, art students experience the highest levels of exam stress and anxiety. A study was done to evaluate the application of coherence and cohesion in academic writing made by third-year English education program students. All in all, these results show that Academic Writing makes an impact in students' writing skills and their final examination proves that.

5.2.2 Discussion on Collected Data for Research Objective 2

Research Objective 2: To examine the individual academic writing skill development of students through the course assignments and final examinations.

To fulfil the second research objective, the researcher created open-ended questions in the questionnaire to identify the students' opinions on the final exam and continuous assessment. In the survey it was found that there are students who want only continuous assessment as a form of assessment. Even though, some of them said that the assignments test them upon their idea and structure of their writings, however, some of them said, the course does not really focus on how to write a message, it focuses more on the citations. As Tharwat EL-Sakran et al. (2017) mentioned, if there is a mismatch between students' and instructors' understanding of teaching and learning concepts, students are likely to become disengaged and view the instruction as irrelevant. When the students were questioned if the course had prepared them well to score in their final exam, some of them were unsure because they mentioned how half of the things were tested in assignments already and tutorials do not really help them to study. They were also asked if the assignments were assessed accurately, they mentioned how some of the assignments are group works and it does not evaluate them individually. This can make them lose marks; therefore, they cannot make inferences whether assessment is accurate or not. Francis et al. (2022), said justifying the fairness of single marks can be difficult particularly when certain students invest significantly more effort and effectively end up supporting less engaged classmates. This situation often allows fewer active students to receive higher marks than their contributions warrant.

Upon collecting and concluding the data collected, The Academic Writing course is generally effective, as evidenced by students' positive feedback on improved writing skills and course satisfaction. Moreover, there is a notable appreciation for the relevance of the course content, which motivates students and impacts their performance positively. Assessment methods, particularly concerning group assignments, raise issues regarding fairness and the accurate reflection of individual contributions. Furthermore, students express a preference for continuous assessment over traditional final examinations highlighting a desire for evaluation methods that better capture their individual efforts and understanding. Consequently, the study suggests a need for course and assessment adjustments to better align with students' expectations and ensure equity in grading.

5.3 Limitation

Throughout the study, there were multiple limitations that hindered the researcher from achieving the fullest. Firstly, the students' self-report was biased. It could be said that they did not want to degrade themselves therefore, they found faults in the course outcomes. Moreover, in the demographic details it was found that the Faculty of Business and Finance students did not respond much and even if they did respond their answers were unclear because English is not their major. Initially, the respondents were supposed to be 50 FAS students and 50 FBF students. However, because of FBF students' lack of participation, the majority of the responses are from FAS students. Along the idea, due to the lack of participants, the researcher opted for open ended questions in the google form instead of interview. Which unfortunately,

led to students using AI generated apps to get the answers for the following questions. Lastly, the specification of this topic is too narrow which makes it harder for the students to relate as well.

5.4 Recommendations

Given the constraints noted, moving toward in-person interviews for future study could improve the breadth and veracity of data collecting. Researchers can mitigate self-report bias and ensure richer qualitative data by having direct talks with students and creating an environment that encourages them to share their personal ideas and insights. Additionally, to broaden the scope of inquiry, researchers could pivot towards exploring the perspectives of teachers within the educational system

5.5 Conclusion

In this research, the efficacy of an Academic Writing course at UTAR was examined through students' feedback and data analysis. Overall, the findings suggest a positive impact on students' writing skills and satisfaction with the course content, indicating its relevance in their academic journey. However, limitations such as self-report bias and lack of participation from specific student demographics, particularly in the Faculty of Business and Finance, were noted. recommendations included employing in-person interviews for more comprehensive data collections and exploring teachers' perspective to gain a holistic understanding. despite these challenges, the study underscores the importance of aligning course content and

assessment methods with student's expectations to ensure equitable learning experiences and outcomes

References

Ayman Ankawi. "Saudi Arabian University Students Perspectives on Issues and Solutions in Academic Writing Learning." *English Language Teaching*, vol. 16, no. 8, 5 July 2023, pp. 1–1, <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v16n8p1>

. "Analysis of Coherence and Cohesion on Students' Academic Writing: A Case Study at the 3rd Year Students at English Education Program." *Alsuna: Journal of Arabic and English Language*, vol. 3, Nov. 2020, pp. 74–82, <https://doi.org/10.31538/alsuna.v3i2.980>.

"Assignments | Home Examination." *Universiteit Twente*, www.utwente.nl/en/examination/toolbox-examination/Assignments/#:~:text=An%20assignment%20is%20a%20piece.

"Assignments | Home Examination." *Universiteit Twente*, www.utwente.nl/en/examination/toolbox-examination/Assignments/#:~:text=An%20assignment%20is%20a%20piece.

Bhardwaj, P. (2019). Types of sampling in research. *Journal of Primary Care Specialties*, 5(3), 157-163.

Dema, Kezang. "Problems in Students' Academic Writings." *Journal of Education and Practice*, vol. 11, June 2020, <https://doi.org/10.7176/jep/11-18-04>

Khokhar, S., Pathan, H., Raheem, A., & Abbasi, A. (2020). Theory Development in Thematic Analysis: Procedure and Practice. , 3, 423-433. <https://doi.org/10.47067/RAMSS.V3I3.79>.

Latpate, R., Kshirsagar, J., Gupta, V., & Chandra, G. (2021). Simple Random Sampling. *Advanced Sampling Methods*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-0622-9_2.

Leli, Lismay. "Analysis of Coherence and Cohesion on Students' Academic Writing: A Case Study at the 3rd Year Students at English Education Program." *Alsuna: Journal of Arabic and English Language*, vol. 3, no. 2, 12 Nov. 2020, pp. 74–82,

<https://doi.org/10.31538/alsuna.v3i2.980>

Lin, Linda H.F., and Bruce Morrison. "Challenges in Academic Writing: Perspectives of Engineering Faculty and L2 Postgraduate Research Students." *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. 63, July 2021, pp. 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2021.03.004>

McCarthy, R., McCarthy, M., Ceccucci, W., & Halawi, L. (2019). What Do Descriptive Statistics Tell Us. *Applying Predictive Analytics*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-14038-0_3.

Montaner-Villalba, Salvador. "Students' Perceptions of ESP Academic Writing Skills through Flipped Learning during Covid-19." *Journal of Language and Education*, vol. 7, no. 4, 14 Dec. 2021, pp.107–116, <https://doi.org/10.17323/jle.2021.11901>

Francis, N., Allen, M., Thomas, J., Orcid, N., & Francis. (2022). *Using group work for assessment -an academic's perspective*. <https://www.advance->

[he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-)

[03/Using%20group%20work%20for%20assessment%20%E2%80%93%20an%20academic%20%E2%80%99s%20perspective.pdf](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2022-03/Using%20group%20work%20for%20assessment%20%E2%80%93%20an%20academic%20%E2%80%99s%20perspective.pdf)

Fisher, Michael. "Student Assessment in Teaching and Learning." *Vanderbilt University*, Vanderbilt University, 2017, cft.vanderbilt.edu/student-assessment-in-teaching-and-learning/.

Pineteh, Ernest A. "The Academic Writing Challenges of Undergraduate Students: A South African Case Study." *International Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, 25 Sept. 2013,

<https://doi.org/10.5430/ijhe.v3n1p12>

“Student Assessment in Teaching and Learning.” *Vanderbilt University*, Vanderbilt University, 2017, cft.vanderbilt.edu/student-assessment-in-teaching-and-learning/.

---Steinmayr, Ricarda, et al. *Academic Achievement*. July 2014.

---. *Academic Achievement*. July 2014.

The University of Sydney. “Writing.” The University of Sydney, 24 Sept. 2021,

www.sydney.edu.au/students/writing.html

Tharwat EL-Sakran, Ahmed, K., & Aya EL-Sakran. (2017). -- UNIVERSITY STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS ACROSS TIME.

DOAJ (DOAJ: Directory of Open Access Journals).

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271873210_EXAMINATION_STRESS_AND_ANGST_A_STUDY_OF_COLLEGE_STUDENTS

---. “The Use of Assignments in Education.” *Base for Electronic Educational Sciences*, vol. 1, Sept. 2020, pp. 20–26, <https://doi.org/10.29329/bedu.2020.253.2>.

Ulum, Ömer. “The Use of Assignments in Education.” *Base for Electronic Educational Sciences*, vol. 1, Sept. 2020, pp. 20–26, <https://doi.org/10.29329/bedu.2020.253.2>.

Zhu, W. (2004). Faculty views on the importance of writing, the nature of academic writing, and teaching and responding to writing in the disciplines. *Journal of Second Language Writing*.13(1):29–48.

Appendix - Google Form

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses 50 Settings

Academic Writing

vocabulary punctuation refe quoting
paraphrasing style audience summarising
grammar language purpose synthesising originality reflection
spelling structure

The Efficacy of Final Examination and Course Assignments in Assessing Students Overall Achievement for The Academic Writing Course in UTAR

B *I* U 🔗 ~~X~~

Hello everyone, I am Charlene Odella Francis. Currently in my final year of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) English Education here at UTAR. As a part of my final year project, I am conducting a research that requires your experience. Your input will make a significant difference. Thank you for participating.

Section A : Demographic Data

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses 50 Settings

Section A : Demographic Data

Description (optional)

Name *

Short answer text

Age *

18-20

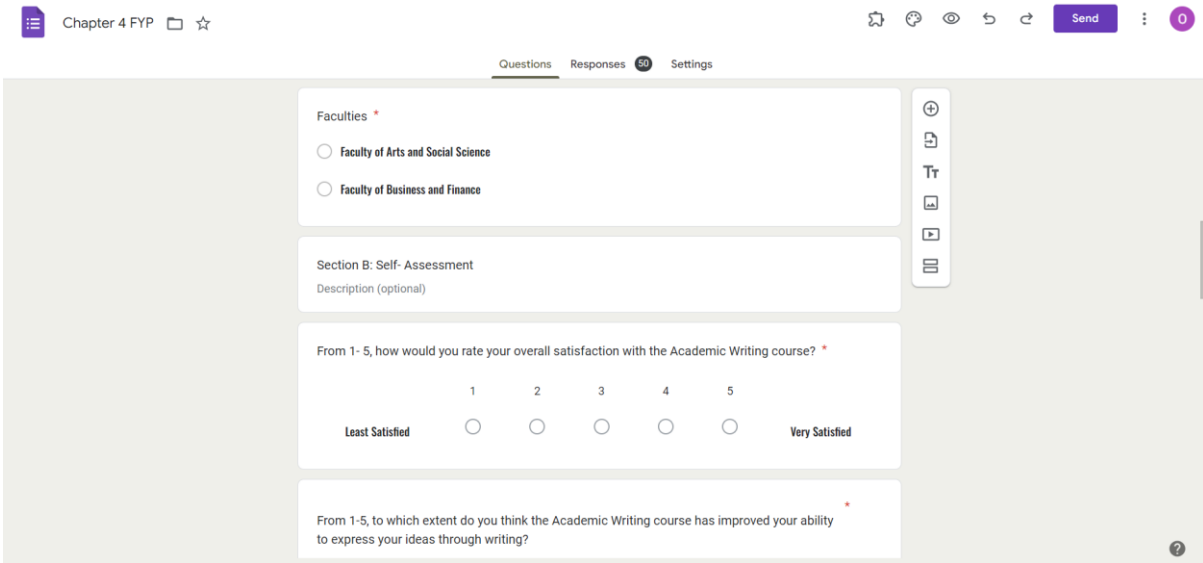
21-23

24-26

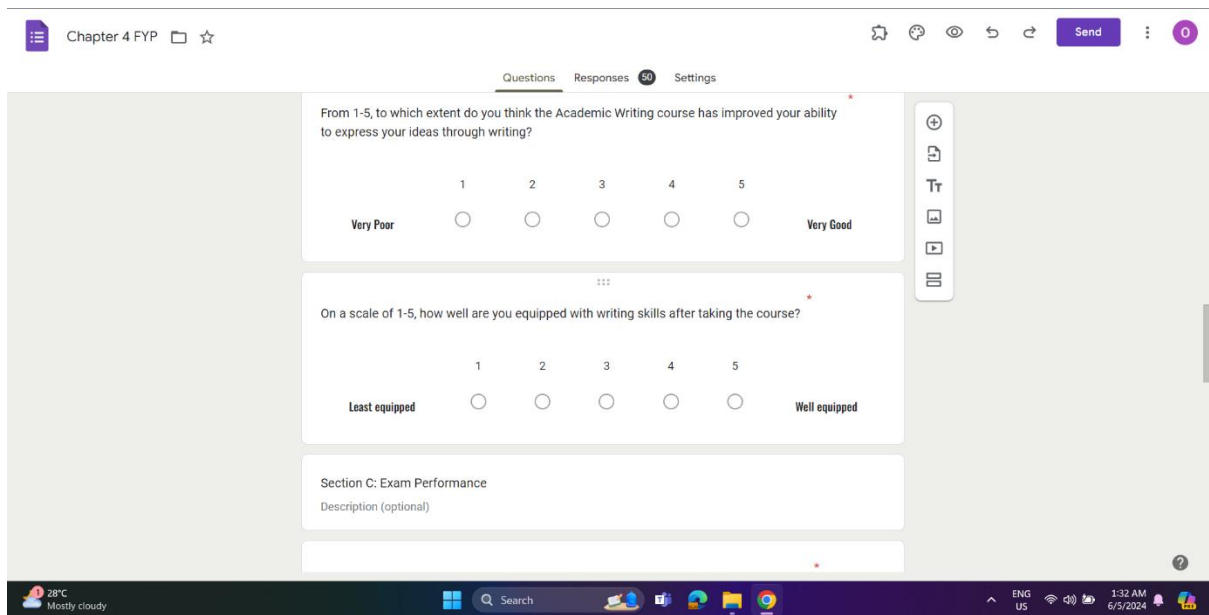
More than 27

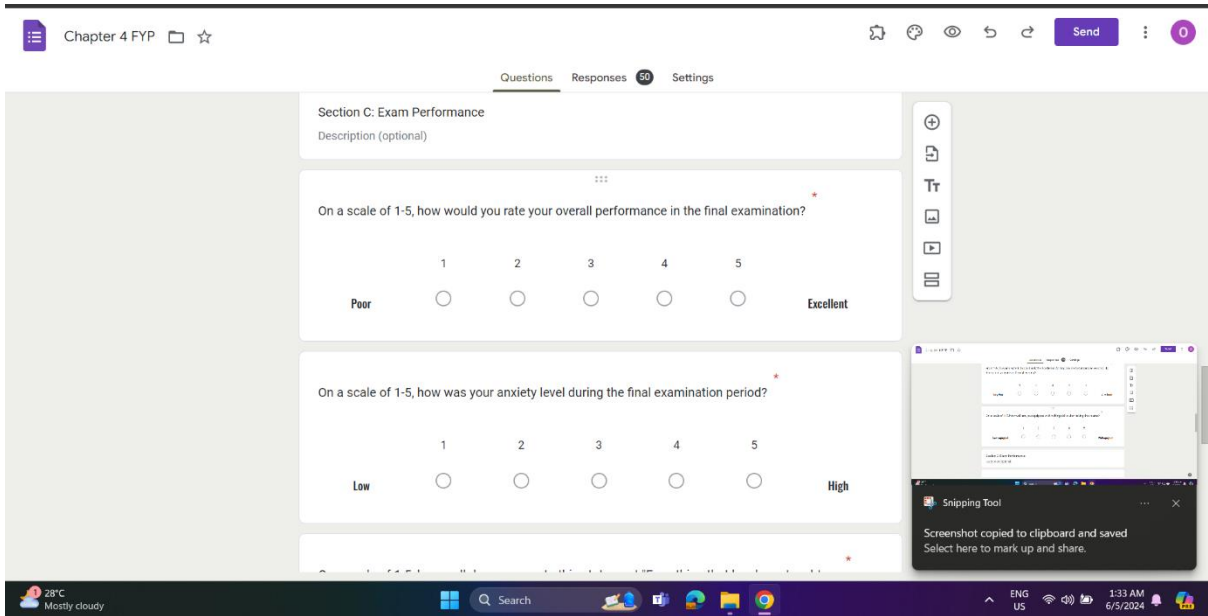
Faculties *

Section A – Demographic Information

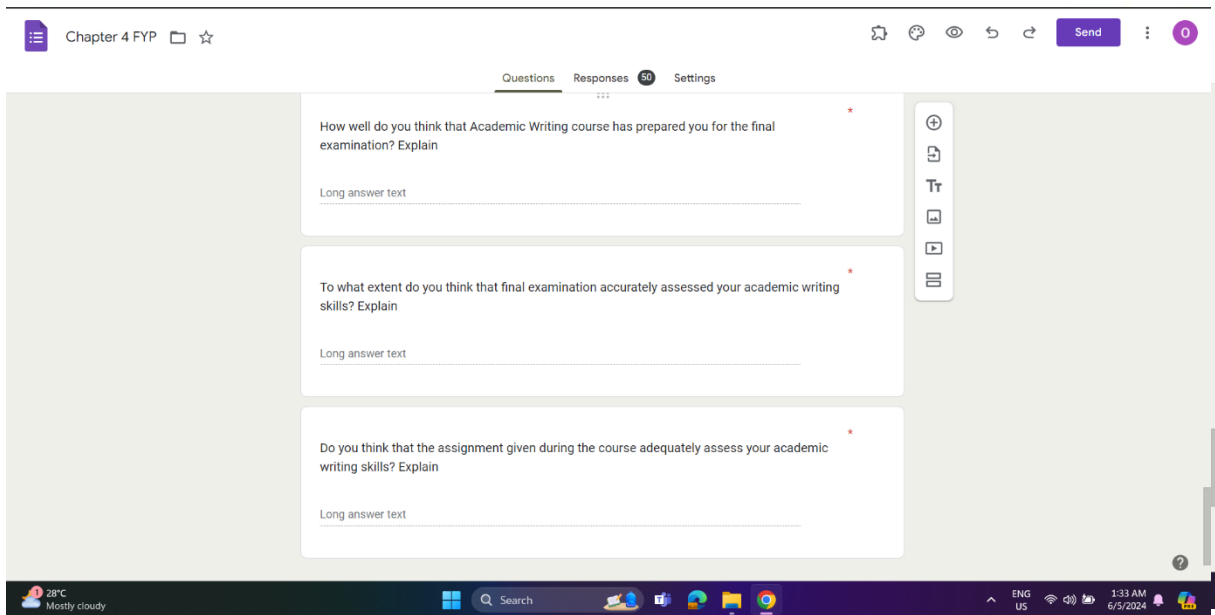


Section B – Self-Assessment





Section C – Exam Performance



Section D – Students opinion on Academic Writing

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses **50** Settings

50 responses [View in Sheets](#)

Accepting responses

Summary Question Individual

Section A : Demographic Data

Name

50 responses

- Phoebe Thien
- Seow Yi Xuan
- Methira Swarnamathi A/P Shankaran
- K.Vasundera
- Chen Zi Yi Livia
- Gabriel Gan

Today's high To tie record

Search

ENG US 12:51 PM 6/5/2024

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses **50** Settings

How well do you think that Academic Writing course has prepared you for the final examination?
Explain

50 responses

I would say somewhere in between sufficient to none because the summary question asked was very difficult and didn't know how to find the right points to combine them into a paragraph.

The course prepared me somewhat for the exam but the exam was more subjective than it was expected to be.

The course prepared students for the final examination in formats and the essay organisation to let us have idea on how to develop the content.

Quite well, I guess it mainly helped with my paragraphing and sectioning of ideas.

I would say the course moderately prepared me for the examination as I'm only bring told of the format, opening and ending phrases of Academic writing. In order to score well in the exam, I would need to have a wide general knowledge so that I have good content to write.

Exceptionally well, particularly in terms of the various subtopics we've covered.

Pretty well as it is a subject where it focuses in writing formal style essays, Academic Writing helped fairly

32°C Hot weather

Search

ENG US 12:54 PM 6/5/2024

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses **60** Settings

How well do you think that Academic Writing course has prepared you for the final examination? Explain

50 responses

The course prepared students for the final examination in formats and the essay organisation to let us have idea on how to develop the content.

Quite well, I guess it mainly helped with my paragraphing and sectioning of ideas.

I would say the course moderately prepared me for the examination as I'm only bring told of the format, opening and ending phrases of Academic writing. In order to score well in the exam, I would need to have a wide general knowledge so that I have good content to write.

Exceptionally well, particularly in terms of the various subtopics we've covered.

Pretty well as it is a subject where it focuses in writing formal style essays, Academic Writing helped fairly during the final examination.

Academic Writing course prepared me well for the final examination. Throughout the course, I've learned various writing techniques, formatting styles, and critical thinking skills

The lecture place has covered the different types of writing correct way to write a response in ADA format

32°C Partly sunny

Search

ENG US 1:00 PM 6/5/2024

Chapter 4 FYP ☆

Questions Responses **60** Settings

To what extent do you think that final examination accurately assessed your academic writing skills? Explain

50 responses

Exam. Generally I can write well but because of insufficient practice on academic writing it caused my downfall.

Partially, as the skill was practiced further in external paperworks (Emails, letters & etc) and not exclusively in the course itself.

I think that the final examination is more on assessing our creativity as the question need us to think out of the box.

I think it assessed it fine. However, it might be a bit unrealistic that one would inherently remember/ memorise every writing format.

I would rate it as 2/5 as the scoring will depend on the person's depth of knowledge based the title given in the final examination.

The exam basically challenged me to apply the concepts and techniques learned throughout the course.

The skills assessed was accurate in final examination as most of the papers needed answers based on specific language features and purposes which was taught in Academic Writing.

32°C Partly sunny

Search

ENG US 1:00 PM 6/5/2024

