RGC Ref. No.:
UGC/FDS12(31)/H02/18
(please insert ref. above)

RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL
COMPETITIVE RESEARCH FUNDING SCHEMES FOR
THE LOCAL SELF-FINANCING DEGREE SECTOR

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (FDS)

Completion Report
(for completed projects only)

Submission Deadlines:	1. *Auditor's report with unspent balance, if any: within **six** months of the approved project completion date.*
	2. *Completion report: within **12** months of the approved project completion date.*

Part A: The Project and Investigator(s)

1. **Project Title**

    Toward understanding English academic writing experiences of students in

    self-financing institutions in Hong Kong

2. **Investigator(s) and Academic Department(s) / Unit(s) Involved**

Research Team	Name / Post	Unit / Department / Institution
Principal Investigator	Dr. LU, Hangyan / Associate Professor	School of Psychology and Education / Gratia Christian College
Co-Investigator(s)	Dr. LI, Yongyan / Associate Professor Dr. HORTA, Hugo Duarte Alves / Associate Professor	Faculty of Education / University of Hong Kong Faculty of Education / University of Hong Kong
Others		

3. **Project Duration**

	Original	Revised	Date of RGC / Institution Approval *(must be quoted)*
Project Start Date	01/01/2019	N.A.	N.A.
Project Completion Date	30/12/2020	30/06/2021 30/12/2021	04/11/2020 20/05/2021

Duration *(in month)*	24	36	04/11/2020 20/05/2021
Deadline for Submission of Completion Report	31/12/2021	31/12/2022	04/11/2020 20/05/2021

Part B: The Final Report

5. Project Objectives

5.1 Objectives as per original application

1. To describe self-financing university students' perception of their language competency in English academic writing and their actual (dis)engagement in standardizing their writing;

2. To analyze the ways students make sense of academic writing across disciplines and across academic and non-academic domains of their life, and how they help shape students' English academic writing perceptions and practices;

3. To examine the extent to which students' projection of future actions in relation to the dominant discourses of academic writing learned through their writing assignments and receiving feedback might foster new perspectives upon English academic writing.

5.2 Revised objectives

Date of approval from the RGC: N.A.

Reasons for the change:

1.

2.

3. ..

5.3 Realisation of the objectives
(Maximum 1 page; please state how and to what extent the project objectives have been achieved; give reasons for under-achievements and outline attempts to overcome problems, if any)
The research was implemented step by step as originally proposed, albeit with some gaps in between due to the unavailability of a RA. Thanks to the two extensions of the project period by 6 months each, all the three objectives have been fully achieved.

5.4 Summary of objectives addressed to date

Objectives *(as per 5.1/5.2 above)*	Addressed *(please tick)*	Percentage Achieved *(please estimate)*

1. *To describe self-financing university students' perception of their language competency in English academic writing and their actual (dis)engagement in standardizing their writing;*	√	100%
2. *To analyze the ways students make sense of academic writing across disciplines and across academic and non-academic domains of their life, and how they help shape students' English academic writing perceptions and practices;*	√	100%
3. *To examine the extent to which students' projection of future actions in relation to the dominant discourses of academic writing learned through their writing assignments and receiving feedback might foster new perspectives upon English academic writing.*	√	100%
4.		

6. Research Outcome

6.1 Major findings and research outcome
(Maximum 1 page; please make reference to Part C where necessary)

The first conference paper titled "<u>Student perception of and (dis)engagement in their university writing in English</u>" described and linked students' perception of and their actual (dis)engagement in their university writing in English, which addresses objective 1. The major finding is that students predominantly perceive English academic writing as useful and self rate it as at a medium level of difficulty; however, they demonstrate different levels of engagement in different aspects and at different times of writing. Students are highly engaged in topic selection in the beginning of a writing process, and in research throughout the writing process. But when it comes to language and citations, high engagement is usually planned in the beginning but not implemented during the writing process due to limited time, motivation or capabilities.

The second conference paper titled "<u>Debunking myths of English academic writing among undergraduate students in Hong Kong</u>" examines the ways students make meaning of English academic writing, which addresses objective 2. The major findings involve three notable myths in students' meaning-making that could help explain the inconsistency between students' perception of and engagement in writing described in the first conference paper. The myths are: The purpose of academic writing is to entertain teachers and students; subject teachers look into content while language teachers help improve language; and citations and references are necessary ornaments. Meanwhile, two contextual factors, the status of English being a lingua franca in students' lives and the convenience that digitalization offers students, are found to be significant in sustaining the three notable myths.

The third conference paper titled "'<u>why do you ask me this? This is not important. Understanding undergraduate students' academic writing across curriculum as social practice</u>" analyzed in more depth how students react to—whether they try to accommodate, oppose or resist—the writing conventions they have learned and explored the possible connections between their reactions and their meaning-making of writing, which addresses objective 3. The major finding is that apart from the romantic institutional view of academic writing as a demonstration of academic socialization in the disciplines, undergraduate students reveal many other perspectives upon English academic writing that contribute to their various reactions toward academic conventions even after they have learned the conventions.

While the conference papers were based on preliminary analyses of data from an ongoing project, the manuscript "<u>English academic writing for academic purposes and beyond: The experiences of undergraduate students in Hong Kong</u>" was written after the completion of data collection and tried to address all the three objectives based on a full set of data. Major findings include (1) the existence of a language-content dichotomy in which language courses tend to value English standardization and academic style conventions while subject courses value the argumentation in the assignments; (2) three ways of meaning-making and corresponding writing practices: strategic writers writing for grades; engaged writers writing for professionalism; dedicated writers writing for impacts; (3) a lack of student agency as a majority of students accommodated writing conventions for the achievement of good grades.

6.2 Potential for further development of the research and the proposed course of action
(Maximum half a page)

First, insights and pedagogical implications arising from this research need to be further tested. For example, further student participatory action research could be conducted for students to explore and leverage their funds of knowledge in their English academic writing and for researchers to learn

more about students' funds of knowledge and whether and how they could be utilized in enhancing students' agency in accommodating or resisting conventions.

Second, quantitative data in the project reveals that the major findings arising from the qualitative data of students studying in three disciplines in a liberal arts college are not fully indicative of a population comprising students studying in a wider variety of 14 disciplines. In the qualitative data, essayist literacy was found to be the dominant literacy used. Further research can be conducted to explore experiences of students studying in disciplines that value alternative academic literacies such as performing arts and engineering.

Lastly, when students talked about their help-seeking practice such as using online language checking service (e.g. Grammarly) and hiring a private tutor to help with their assignments, they depicted the strategies as helpful for them to achieve their writing purposes. However, to what extent it is ethical for students to solicit external help with their solely-authored assignments need further exploration.

Proposed course of action: In response to the first identified potential for further development of the research, the PI aims to write up a research proposal in the next two years to conduct action research to explore effective ways for students to find the broader relevance of English academic writing in their own lives and lives around them so as to be more engaged in learning the academic conventions and more agentive in reacting to the conventions.

7. **Layman's Summary**
   (Describe <u>in layman's language</u> the nature, significance and value of the research project, in no more than 200 words)

The current research project explored 12 undergraduate students' English academic writing experiences in contexts, including the context of their institution which is an English-medium liberal arts college, the context of the Hong Kong society where English is commonly used as a lingua franca, and the context of students' lives beyond the college. Major findings include (1) the existence of a language-content dichotomy in which language courses tend to value standard English usage and citations while subject courses value the idea development in the assignments; (2) three types of student writers with correspondingly different writing purposes in mind: strategic writers writing for grades; engaged writers writing for professionalism; dedicated writers writing for impacts; (3) a lack of power or resources to fulfil their potential for the strategic writers who try to learn and apply English academic writing skills only when it seemingly helps them achieve good grades. This research adds a Hong Kong perspective to the growing body of case study research in academic literacy. It also offers practical guidance of the development of academic writing programs which are truly responsive to student needs as well as their assets so that there will be more engaged and dedicated writers.

Part C: Research Output

8. **Peer-Reviewed Journal Publication(s) Arising <u>Directly</u> From This Research Project**
    (Please attach a copy of the publication and/or the letter of acceptance if not yet submitted in the previous progress report(s). All listed publications must acknowledge RGC's funding support by quoting the specific grant reference.)

The Latest Status of Publications				Author(s) *(denote the corresponding author with an asterisk*)*	Title and Journal / Book *(with the volume, pages and other necessary publishing details specified)*	Submitted to RGC *(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)*	Attached to this Report *(Yes or No)*	Acknowledged the Support of RGC *(Yes or No)*	Accessible from the Institutional Repository *(Yes or No)*
Year of Publication	Year of Acceptance *(For paper accepted but not yet published)*	Under Review	Under Preparation *(optional)*						
	√			Hangyan Lu* and Zhi Yeng Alicia Ha	English academic writing for academic purposes and beyond: The experiences of undergraduate students in Hong Kong, *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

9. **Recognized International Conference(s) In Which Paper(s) Related To This Research Project Was / Were Delivered**
    (Please attach a copy of each conference abstract)

Month / Year / Place	Title	Conference Name	Submitted to RGC *(indicate the year ending of the relevant progress report)*	Attached to this Report *(Yes or No)*	Acknowledged the Support of RGC *(Yes or No)*	Accessible from the Institutional Repository *(Yes or No)*

Nov / 2019 / Perth	Student perception of and (dis)engagement in their university writing in English	*Applied Linguistics Conference 2019*	Yes *(30/09/2019)*	Yes	Yes	Yes
Nov / 2019 / Fremantle	Debunking myths of English academic writing among undergraduate students	*14th biennial conference of the Association for Academic Language and Learning*	Yes *(30/09/2019)*	Yes	Yes	Yes
July / 2021 / Barcelona	Mysteries in writing for academic purposes at an EMI university in Hong Kong	*AELFE-TAPP 2020 International Conference – Multilingual academic and professional communication in a networked world*	Yes *(15/10/2020)*	No (The conference was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic)	N.A.	N.A.
May / 2021 / Hong Kong	"Why do you ask me this? This is not important." Understanding undergraduate students' academic writing across curriculum as social practice	*3rd International Conference on English Across the Curriculum*	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

10. Whether Research Experience And New Knowledge Has Been Transferred / Has Contributed To Teaching And Learning
(Please elaborate)

With three myths identified from the research, the PI has been initiating more explicit

dialogues with students on the reasons for academic conventions. Students are informed that

apart from entertaining teachers, the application of academic conventions are also for

academic rigor and the skills can be transferred to many other contexts and create impacts

on students' personal and professional lives and the lives around them.

11. Student(s) Trained
(Please attach a copy of the title page of the thesis)

Name	Degree Registered for	Date of Registration	Date of Thesis Submission / Graduation
N.A.			

12. Other Impact

(e.g. award of patents or prizes, collaboration with other research institutions, technology transfer, teaching enhancement, etc.)

N.A.

13. **Statistics on Research Outputs**

	Peer-reviewed Journal Publications	**Conference Papers**	**Scholarly Books, Monographs and Chapters**	**Patents Awarded**	**Other Research Outputs (please specify)**	
No. of outputs arising directly from this research project	1 revised and under review	3	0	0	Type	No.
					0	0

14. **Public Access Of Completion Report**
(Please specify the information, if any, that cannot be provided for public access and give the reasons.)

Information that Cannot Be Provided for Public Access	**Reasons**
N.A.	