

Project Title : English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) and the CAES  
Self-Access Initiative: Enhancing the Support of  
English in the Disciplines for HKU Students

Leading University : The University of Hong Kong

Participating UGC-funded Nil  
University(ies) :

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### **Summary of Proposal**

University students at a medium of English university need to have the opportunity to enhance their academic, professional and social English language skills. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) realises the importance of a self-access language learning component within students' English enhancement courses. The Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES) is the established self-access language learning provider. It provides human services to students who seek help and support in advancing their English. One of these essential and successful services is the English Teaching Assistant (ETA) initiative. As well as providing services to the HKU-wide population of students as currently happens, these qualified, native, near-peer advisors and workshop/discussion facilitators can provide a direct service to support CAES teachers and teachers in the English Enhancement courses at CAES. All students, unless they are exempted, have to enroll for the Core University English (CUE) course in the first year, this amounts to 2 910 students a year, and most students in their second or third year have to enroll for an English in the Disciplines (ED) course. This amounts to 3 306 students. In total, 6 216 students could potentially need extra out of class, self-access support on their course.

This proposal aims to expand self-access facilities and support for HKU students outlined in a 2016 university document by recruiting a further two English Teaching Assistants to the three current assistants who can promote and support self-access activities in the CAES Advisory Zone, the Centre's equivalent of a Self-Access/Independent Language Learning Centre. These additional two ETAs would help increase self-access provision for HKU students in a targeted manner by providing

services that directly support the learning of students taking English Enhancement courses offered at CAES during years one to three at the HKU. The Self-Access Coordinator, along with CAES course Programme Coordinators, would oversee the initiatives, which primarily include providing weekly English language workshops, discussions and advising that targets areas in the CUE and ED curricula that students may need further out-of-class help with or need to study independently on.

### **Summary of Final Report**

The project aims were to expand self-access facilities and support for HKU students by recruiting two ‘research’ ETAs. The main goal recruiting these ETAs was to support specific research-based self-access activities in the CAES Advisory Zone. They helped increase self-access provision for HKU students in a targeted manner by designing and providing services and resources that directly supported the learning of students taking ED courses offered at CAES during years one to three at the HKU.

The Self-Access Coordinator, along with specific CAES course Programme Coordinators, oversaw the project activities, which included the ETAs in this project researching ED course activities and assessments during pre-semester course meetings, observing classes and discussing learning with current CAES students, devising workshops, discussions, advising sessions and online resources, and visiting ED classes during semester time to inform students and teachers of such support activities. The project outcomes included a marked increase of an additional 2 951 students who used the Self Access services predominately run by the ETAs in 2017-2018, a marked increase of students of approximately 1 600 each semester, who were directly informed of (1) the Self Access services applicable to their CAES ED course and beyond, via the ETA CAES ED and CUE class visits, and (2) ED course specific activities and resources to supplement course activities and assessments. This project has provided CAES and the ETA team with invaluable and improved understanding, through the research undertaken, how to help HKU students who seek extra support out of class via focused consultations and tailored workshops and discussions, target online resources and links for CAES ED courses housed on an updated Self-Study website, and target online self-study videos that can be used in-class and/or as out of class supplementary tasks.

The success of the ETA project has given rise in 2019-2020 and beyond for significant resources and funding to be allocated by CAES to expand the Self Access services CAES provides. This contemporary research-based Self-Access framework can be adopted by other institutions in Hong Kong and beyond. The presentation and submitted

chapter for the 2018 HK Continuing Professional Development Hub for University English Teachers was the initial promotion of the project outcomes. The 2020 Hong Kong Continuing Professional Development International Conference will also be a major platform for dissemination and sharing with the Hong Kong community.