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A Survey on the Needs for English for Academic Purposes Courses among Graduate EFL Students in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is an important component of graduate education, particularly for students who use English for academic study and research. Although previous research has examined EAP needs in different educational contexts, research focusing specifically on graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia remains relatively limited. This study investigates the perceived EAP needs of graduate EFL students in Saudi universities across nine dimensions: individual skill wants, learning motivation, learning strategies, teacher quality, curriculum design, classroom teaching, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment methods. The study used a quantitative survey design to examine graduate students' perceptions of their academic English needs. The study collected data from 1,200 graduate students at Saudi universities and analyzed them using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. The findings indicate that participants reported substantial needs across the EAP dimensions examined, with academic skills, learning support, instructional practices, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment representing important areas of students' perceived needs. The findings further indicate that graduate students' EAP needs extend beyond individual language skills to include curriculum, classroom instruction, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment. The study highlights the importance of aligning EAP provision with graduate students' academic requirements and their study and research activities. The findings provide empirical evidence that may support developing and refining EAP courses for graduate EFL students in Saudi universities.

Keywords: English for Academic Purposes (EAP), needs analysis, graduate students, EFL, learning resources

1. Introduction

English has become a major language of international academic communication, scientific publication, and knowledge dissemination. In contemporary higher education, graduate students increasingly need English to access scholarly literature, write research papers and theses, present research findings, and participate in academic communication (Hyland, 2016). Because of these pressures, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) matters more than ever, focusing on the language skills, academic literacy, and communicative norms students need to participate in academic settings. Similarly Song & Zhou (2022) study show that graduate students need academic English tracks closely aligned with the demands of their coursework and research.

Graduate students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings who do academic work in English can face distinct difficulties. Their workload often includes parsing dense research papers, drafting theses and journal articles, contributing to seminars, and presenting their work. General English proficiency alone is not enough for this work, which also requires familiarity with academic vocabulary, disciplinary discourse, research writing, and academic communication. Previous studies identify academic writing and communication as areas where graduate students need substantial support, especially for research-related work (Mahmoud, 2024; Mahmud & Mohammad, 2023).

EAP has grown into a major strand of applied linguistics. EAP aims to build the linguistic and rhetorical tools students need for academia, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and participation in disciplinary discourse (Hyland, 2006; Jordan, 1997). While general English teaching remains broad, EAP focuses directly on the academic tasks and communicative practices students face in specific educational settings (Basturkmen, 2010; Charles & Pecorari, 2016). For graduate students, this study involves reading scholarly literature, synthesizing material from multiple sources,

drafting papers, theses, dissertations, and presenting research findings.

English plays a significant part across Saudi higher education, especially in professional and scientific fields such as medicine, engineering, business, and information technology. Postgraduate students across these disciplines regularly review published literature, conduct research, write academic papers, and present their results in English. Earlier studies point to recurring struggles among Saudi students with academic reading and writing, particularly with academic vocabulary, structuring their thoughts, and following academic conventions (Alqahtani, 2011; Alqurashi, 2016). Previous studies also show how central English remains to postgraduate students' academic work in Saudi universities. For instance Alshaye (2025) found that Saudi postgraduates relied heavily on English when preparing assignments, writing dissertations, giving presentations, and conducting research.

In this Saudi context, academic writing is especially critical. These scholars write literature reviews, research papers, theses, and dissertations in English to meet disciplinary and broader academic standards. Mahmud & Mohammad (2023) study show that Saudi graduate students face obstacles with language, argumentation, research-article genres, and conveying complex ideas in scholarly texts. These results show why educators must identify the academic English graduate students actually need, so EAP teaching matches the work expected of them.

EAP courses aim to help students build the language proficiencies they need to succeed academically. However, their effectiveness depends largely on how closely what is taught, and how it is taught, matches what learners genuinely need for their studies (Brown, 2016; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). Needs analysis of students' language demands, difficulties, preferences, and academic goals provides an important foundation for planning and assessing EAP courses and building appropriate materials (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Long, 2005). Building an English language program still relies on pinpointing what students need for their studies, as newer work on EAP needs analysis continues to argue (Song & Zhou, 2022).

Researchers have studied EAP needs in many educational settings, but they have paid less attention to graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia. Saudi-based research has already covered writing struggles, general language needs, and what English means for postgraduates. However, still lacks a broader view of how these students perceive their own EAP requirements across multiple areas. Recent work in Saudi universities highlights not only how critical English is for postgraduate work, but also how closely language requirements tie into students' day-to-day study and research (Alshaye, 2025; Mahmoud, 2024).

To address this gap, this study examines the EAP needs of Saudi graduate EFL students through nine specific lenses: individual skill needs, learning motivation, learning strategies, teacher quality, curriculum design, classroom teaching, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment methods. It does so by examining how students rate their academic English needs across these areas. The study aims to clarify where postgraduates may need additional EAP support and help designers build courses that fit the academic realities of Saudi graduate programs.

The study therefore answers these specific research questions, starting with: What are the EAP needs of graduate EFL students in Saudi universities? What academic English skills do graduate students consider important? What preferences do graduate students express regarding EAP learning, teaching, resources, materials, and assessment?

2. Literature Review

2.1 English for Academic Purposes and Needs Analysis

EAP is essential across universities and in international education in applied linguistics (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hyland, 2006). In many non-English-speaking settings, universities increasingly expect students to handle academic reading, write papers, deliver presentations, and join global scholarly discussions in English (Jordan, 1997). To meet this demand, EAP emerged to help students build the language, rhetorical tools, and literacy they need to function effectively in university settings (Basturkmen, 2010; Bruce, 2011). Rather than teaching general language skills, EAP focuses on the genres, communicative habits, and disciplinary standards students actually meet in their degree work. These demands include making sense of journal articles, synthesizing material from multiple sources, writing academic papers, and presenting research (Charles & Pecorari, 2016; Hyland, 2006).

EAP matters especially in graduate education, where students spend significant time working with academic publications and conducting research. Students may need to master technical vocabulary in their field, assess scholarly sources, write theses, research articles, and present their work orally as well as in writing. Recent research shows that EFL graduate students have varied EAP needs across academic reading, writing, and research dissemination. In a large study of EFL graduate students in Taiwan, Huang (2024) found that academic reading and writing were central to students' needs. However, specific demands shifted by field of study and level of education. Results like this show why EAP courses should be built around what graduate students actually have to do

academically, rather than relying solely on general English teaching.

Designing and evaluating EAP courses therefore depends directly on needs analysis (Brown, 2016; Long, 2005). Hutchinson and Waters (1987) highlight necessities, lacks, and wants, drawing a line between the demands of the target situation and the areas learners themselves view as priorities for their study. Dudley-Evans and St John, (1998) also mentioned that diagnosing language needs means closely examining a student's prior studies, disciplinary setting, current proficiency, and learning goals. Similarly, Long (2005) contends that gathering data from multiple sources and methods provides a fuller picture of what learners actually require. More recent work continues to highlight systematic needs analysis as a way to build constructively aligned EAP courses and tie classroom work directly to students' disciplinary demands and academic settings (MacDiarmid & Haghi, 2024). Therefore, needs analysis is a valuable starting point for identifying the language demands, learning styles, and support needs that EAP course design must address.

2.2 Academic English Needs of Graduate Students

Graduate education requires students to engage with academic texts and produce increasingly complex forms of academic communication. Reading takes on special weight here, since graduate work depends on working through large volumes of journal articles, scholarly books, conference papers, and related material. In this context, reading goes well beyond decoding words and individual sentences; students must track arguments, make sense of findings, weigh evidence, and connect ideas across several sources (Grabe & Stoller, 2013; Hirvela, 2016). EFL learners often struggle with this, largely because scholarly writing relies heavily on discipline-specific arguments, specialized vocabulary, and intricate rhetorical structures. Current studies still treat reading as a major element of EAP instruction. For instance, Huang (2024) showed not only those graduate students faced heavy reading loads, but also that the scale of those demands varied by field.

Academic writing is just as central to graduate study. Program expectations for graduate students typically include research papers, literature reviews, theses, and dissertations, with publication manuscripts frequently added to the list (Bitchener, 2010; Hyland, 2016; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). To write academically, students must build arguments, present information logically, incorporate and cite outside sources, and adhere to specific genre and disciplinary norms (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Swales & Feak, 2012). For EFL students, these demands pose a particular challenge, as academic writing requires strong language proficiency alongside a grasp of academic discourse and rhetorical conventions.

Data from Saudi higher education confirm that these writing demands carry real weight. According to Mahmud and Mohammad (2023), Saudi graduate students struggled with research writing, especially when laying out complex ideas clearly, framing convincing arguments, and structuring research articles. Their results suggest that graduate writing support cannot stop at correct grammar; students need broader competencies in research writing and scholarly communication. More broadly, Saudi universities rely heavily on English for postgraduate academic work. Alshaye (2025) observed that postgraduate students relied on English across multiple responsibilities, from coursework assignments and dissertations to presentations and research. These findings show that graduate students do not need support in just one isolated skill; their EAP demands cut across several academic abilities at once.

Moreover, along with reading and writing, postgraduates may also need academic speaking and listening to handle lectures, seminars, conference presentations, and other academic conversations involved in their work. EAP instruction cannot target only writing; it must reflect the broad mix of academic situations students actually face.

2.3 Previous Studies on Graduate Students' EAP Needs

Several earlier studies have examined what graduate students need from EAP across a variety of educational settings and EFL backgrounds. In Taiwan, postgraduates have identified major needs in academic reading and writing, with doctoral candidates facing the heaviest demands because of thesis work and pressure to publish (Li-Shih, 2018). Turkish research reports a comparable picture, noting marked needs in academic writing and oral communication, especially when drafting research articles and speaking at international conferences (Uzun, 2018). These results show a strong link between graduate students' EAP needs and the academic and research duties of postgraduate study.

Recent studies continue to indicate how much needs-based EAP provision matters. In a large-scale study of Taiwanese EFL graduate students, reading and writing proved foundational to their academic work, though specific needs differed by discipline and level of study (Huang, 2024). A study indicates that designing an EAP curriculum requires considering students' views. Similarly, designing a sound EAP course requires a careful, structured look at where students will actually use their English, their specific disciplines, and their learning needs (MacDiarmid & Haghi, 2024).

Studies from Saudi Arabia have turned to the same issues, tracking what academic English demands of graduate students and where they struggle. Alqahtani (2011) reported that Saudi postgraduates enrolled in the UK struggled with the demands of studying in English, especially the language requirements of their programs. In their writing, Saudi graduate students have pointed to recurring problems with structuring arguments, choosing suitable academic vocabulary, and handling citation conventions properly (Alqurashi, 2016). A study by Mahmud and Mohammad (2023) highlights further difficulties among Saudi graduate students, particularly in language use, argument development, and handling research articles. At the same time, postgraduate students in Saudi universities rely heavily on English for a wide range of academic work, from coursework and presentations to dissertations and research (Alshaye, 2025).

Previous studies have made a similar case: EAP teaching has to align with the academic and disciplinary demands students actually face. Depending on their discipline, graduate students face distinct terminology, academic genres, research conventions, and communication practices (Hyland, 2016). As a result, an EAP course that relies mainly on general English may fail to cover the full range of academic tasks students must handle. Huang (2024) reaches a comparable conclusion, arguing that needs-based EAP programs must reflect the reading and writing students actually do while adjusting for differences in discipline and study level.

2.4 Research Gap

Previous studies on EAP have assessed academic English widely studied internationally; comparatively little work has examined how graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia perceive their own EAP requirements. Several studies in Saudi Arabia have focused on writing difficulties, general English needs, and language use in postgraduate study (Alqahtani, 2011; Alshaye, 2025; Alqurashi, 2016; Mahmud & Mohammad, 2023). Much of this work focuses on specific facets of academic English, particularly writing, rather than what graduate students require across a wider spectrum of EAP dimensions. Recent international work has shown that examining graduate students across varied academic skills, study preferences, course demands, and disciplines has been fruitful (Huang, 2024).

In addition, substantial shifts toward internationalization and postgraduate research across Saudi higher education have made English far more central to study and academic communication. However, empirical data remain limited on how graduate EFL students view their academic English requirements and what EAP support they believe fits their work. This study addresses that gap by assessing graduate students' perceived EAP needs across nine areas: individual skill wants, learning motivation, learning strategies, teachers' quality, curriculum design, classroom teaching, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment methods. This approach builds on prior research on Saudi graduate students by offering a broader survey of the EAP needs and preferences they report.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a quantitative survey design to examine what graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia need from EAP. Surveys fit this research well, as the goal was to gather how a fairly large cohort of graduate students viewed their own academic English needs (Brown, 2016; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). The questionnaire covered nine distinct areas of EAP needs as mentioned in the research instruments and data collection section. The quantitative method allowed the study to aggregate students' reports and trace trends in their perceived EAP needs across the included academic environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.2 Participants

All participants were enrolled in Saudi universities at the master’s or doctoral level. The cohort data were from four broad academic domains: Science/Engineering, Medical/Health Sciences, Business/Management, and Humanities/Social Sciences. Bringing students across disciplines captured the variation of academic settings where English is used for reading, research, and academic purposes (Alqahtani, 2011; Alqurashi, 2016; Hyland, 2016).

Participants were selected through convenience sampling. We distributed the survey through university mailing lists, graduate student networks, and academic channels. The initial recruitment target was 1,200 participants, and exactly 1,200 graduate students completed the survey. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and used only for research purposes.

3.3 Research Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire to examine graduate students’ EAP needs and their views of EAP instruction. The study drew on existing EAP needs analysis instruments (Li-Shih, 2018; Uzun, 2018). The questionnaire was tailored to fit the Saudi graduate EFL setting. The questionnaire covered nine distinct areas of EAP

needs: individual skill wants, learning motivation, learning strategies, teachers' quality, curriculum design, classroom teaching, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment methods. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections: demographic information, academic skills, learning preferences, course preferences, resources and materials, assessment preferences, and perceptions of existing EAP courses. Participants rated all items using a five-point Likert scale that ran from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

The questionnaire was shared online via Google Forms and sent through university communication channels, graduate student mailing lists, and academic networks. Taking part was voluntary; participants learned what the study was about before giving their consent online. The survey ran for four weeks, with occasional reminder notices sent out during that time. Anonymity and confidentiality were protected from start to finish because the survey gathered no identifying details from respondents (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009).

3.4 Validity, Piloting, and Reliability

To establish content validity, three experts in applied linguistics and EAP instruction reviewed the questionnaire, and the researchers made minor revisions based on their feedback (Brown, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). We then ran a pilot with 30 graduate students to identify confusing phrasing and improve the survey's overall presentation and flow.

Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the questionnaire's internal consistency. Across the questionnaire, the reliability coefficient was .89, and individual sections ranged from .82 to .91, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

3.5 Data Analysis

All analyses were performed in SPSS version 26. To summarize participants' responses across the nine EAP dimensions, we generated descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Mean scores captured how strongly participants agreed with each item, and standard deviations reflected how much their answers varied.

The analysis included students' academic skills, learning motivation and strategies, teacher quality, curriculum design, classroom teaching, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment preferences. These descriptive figures served to highlight broader trends in what graduate students felt they needed and preferred in EAP.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The relevant IRB approved the study before data collection. Participation was entirely voluntary; respondents gave informed consent online after reading the study purpose and learning they could leave at any time without penalty. We gathered no personal identifiers, keeping all records fully anonymous and confidential from start to finish. We pooled all findings into aggregate summaries so no individual participant could be singled out.

4. Results

The findings present the results for graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia. These results draw directly on questionnaire data from master's and doctoral students studying at Saudi universities. The questionnaire measured nine distinct dimensions of EAP needs, and descriptive statistics for each are reported below.

Table 1. General Description of EAP Learning Needs of Graduate Students in KSA

Dimension	Mean	Std: Deviation
Learners' individual wants	4.31	0.61
Learners' learning motivation	3.89	0.94
Learners' learning strategy	4.18	0.67
Teachers' quality	4.12	0.88
Curriculum design	4.05	0.70
Classroom teaching	4.09	0.73
Learning resource	4.42	0.55
Teaching material	4.14	0.71
Assessment method	4.01	0.82
The Whole Questionnaire	4.13	0.74

As shown in Table 1, all nine dimensions received mean scores above 3.50. Learning resources ranked highest (M = 4.42), followed by learners' individual wants (M = 4.31) and learning strategies (M = 4.18). Out of the nine dimensions, learning motivation had the lowest mean score (M = 3.89). Overall, the mean was 4.13.

Table 2. Learners' Individual Wants

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
Listening	4.42	0.87
Reading	4.38	0.91
Speaking	4.29	0.94
Writing	4.35	0.89
Translation	4.18	0.96

Table 2 shows that listening received the highest mean (M = 4.42), followed by reading (M = 4.38) and writing (M = 4.35). Speaking averaged 4.29, and translation last, with a mean score of 4.18.

Table 3. Learners' Learning Strategies

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
Interaction with English-native scholars	4.31	0.79
Cooperative learning with peers	4.08	0.96
Seeking teacher assistance	4.29	0.81

Table 3 highlights that the highest mean was for interaction with English-native scholars (M = 4.31), followed by seeking teacher assistance (M = 4.29). For cooperative learning with peers, the mean score was 4.08.

Table 4. Classroom Teaching Preferences

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
Diversified classroom activities	4.12	0.97
Thesis/dissertation-focused communication	3.58	1.06
Multiple teaching modes	4.08	0.89
Authentic simulated exercises	4.23	0.86

As shown in Table 4, authentic simulated exercises ranked highest (M = 4.23), followed by diversified classroom activities (M = 4.12) and multiple teaching modes (M = 4.08). Within this dimension, thesis/dissertation-focused communication had the lowest mean.

Table 5. Learning Resource Needs

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
Regular English academic activities	3.92	1.04
Cooperation with distinguished universities	4.31	0.88
Financial support (subsidies)	4.62	0.53
Expanded English electronic resources	4.48	0.79
Self-learning platforms	4.19	0.93

As shown in Table 5, financial support had the highest mean score (M = 4.62), followed by expanded English electronic resources (M = 4.48) and cooperation with distinguished universities (M = 4.31). Self-learning platforms averaged 4.19. In contrast, regular English academic activities recorded the lowest mean score across the dimension (M = 3.92).

Table 6. Needs for Teaching Materials

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
General EAP knowledge	4.11	0.92
Scientific research skills	4.35	0.89
Practicable extracurricular readings	4.09	0.94
Research communication competence	4.28	0.91
Professional English competence	4.14	0.96
Job application preparation	3.71	1.12

Table 6 results indicate that respondents rated scientific research skills highest (M = 4.35), followed by research communication competence (M = 4.28). Professional English competence received a mean score of 4.14, while general EAP knowledge and practical extracurricular readings received mean scores of 4.11 and 4.09, respectively. Job application preparation received the lowest mean rating (M = 3.71).

Table 7. Assessment Method Preferences

Component Items	Mean	Std: Deviation
Summative assessment only	3.48	1.18
Formative assessment only	4.28	0.89
Combination of both	4.31	0.85

As shown in Table 7, combining formative and summative assessment yielded the top mean score (M = 4.31), with formative assessment alone ranking second (M = 4.28). Summative assessment alone ranked lowest (M = 3.48).

5. Discussion

The study results highlight that graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia perceive a wide range of EAP needs. Across the nine dimensions, EAP needs appear to encompass more than discrete language skills, including learning strategies, classroom practices, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment. This result aligns with the longstanding view that effective EAP instruction must be grounded in students' academic requirements and the specific settings where postgraduate work happens in English (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987).

The data on discrete language skills align with earlier studies showing that graduate students need English across varied academic tasks rather than within a single skill. Postgraduate education involves engaging with academic literature, following lectures and presentations, and writing research papers, which helps explain the comparatively heavy demand for listening, reading, and writing observed here. Studies of graduate EFL students elsewhere reflect this same focus on reading and writing, especially in settings where postgraduate programs require heavy engagement with academic writing and research literature (Li-Shih, 2018; Uzun, 2018). Recent work points in the same direction, showing that reading and writing remain central to graduate study and that EAP courses must be planned around the student's academic level and specific field (Huang, 2024).

The data on learning strategies align with established EAP work that places heavy weight on interaction, guidance, and active student involvement. Because students favored teacher help and contact with native-English-speaking scholars, they clearly value learning academic English through direct guidance and exchange. That aligns with broader work in language education, where learner strategies and interactive practice have long received sustained attention (Kelly Hall, 2013). Even so, peer collaboration still carried weight in the responses, if not quite as much as the other options. Altogether, the data argue against pinning EAP teaching to any single method, pointing instead toward a varied mix of learning opportunities.

The emphasis on classroom teaching strengthens the case for tying EAP directly to academic activities. Students clearly favored authentic simulations, a variety of classroom tasks, and multiple teaching approaches. These preferences support the argument that EAP should prepare students for the academic tasks and communicative practices they will face in their fields (Basturkmen, 2010; Hyland, 2016). The data support using classroom activities that let students practice academic communication in settings relevant to postgraduate work.

This heavy demand for teaching materials and learning resources aligns with earlier studies highlighting how much students rely on resources for academic and research work. Postgraduates require materials that help them work through scholarly literature, handle research tasks, and communicate academically. These strong marks for digital resources, research skills, and research communication fit neatly into the view that EAP prepares students to enter academic and disciplinary communities (Charles & Pecorari, 2016; Hyland, 2016). The data match earlier work showing that what graduate students need from EAP is tied directly to their everyday research and course duties (Li-Shih, 2018; Uzun, 2018).

The assessment data show a clear leaning toward ongoing appraisal rather than grading schemes based solely on summative evaluation. This aligns with the mainstream approach to formative assessment, which provides feedback as students learn while keeping summative grades as part of the final mark (Brown 2016). This result supports adopting grading methods that reflect the actual tasks and academic skills taught in EAP classes.

Overall, these results align with earlier literature on graduate EAP needs, while grounding that picture in data from Saudi universities. Earlier research has placed particular weight on academic language ability, research skills, learner demands, and making EAP fit the specific setting (Hyland, 2016; Li-Shih, 2018; Uzun, 2018). Similarly, these results indicate that graduate students' EAP needs span language skills, study habits, learning resources, teaching materials, and assessment. Accordingly, the data support the view that EAP courses must match both the academic demands placed on graduate students and the settings where they actually use English.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated what graduate EFL students in Saudi Arabia felt they needed from EAP using a quantitative survey organized around nine dimensions of EAP provision. Across every area surveyed, the results show that graduate students reported a high level of EAP need. The study shows that these demands extend beyond learning academic English itself; they also cover the broader conditions students need to participate in coursework and research.

This study provides a survey-derived perspective of what graduate students say they need and adds to the growing literature on EAP within Saudi universities. These results offer a starting point for thinking about how EAP courses align with the settings and demands of graduate-level work.

7. Implications for EAP Practice

Graduate-level EAP courses need to cover more than language skills. The findings suggest they should address the tasks and academic practices students face in postgraduate study. Course and class materials can be designed around reading, writing, research presentation, and other tasks that reflect students' actual academic work. EAP teaching can use different formats and classroom setups, giving learners a chance to practice these academic demands in realistic settings. Instructors can balance formative checks with summative tests, using the former to guide students as they learn and the latter to gauge their broader academic progress.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, because the data reflect how participants perceive their own abilities, they do not directly measure actual English performance. Second, although the cohort came from a range of academic fields, we did not examine differences between disciplines. Third, because the design was cross-sectional, it offers only a single perspective of how students felt at one moment in graduate school.

Future work might track graduate students' EAP needs over time through qualitative methods while more thoroughly teasing out disciplinary differences. It would also be useful to set student views against faculty perspectives on what graduate-level EAP demands.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Faisal University (Proposal Number: KFU-2026-ETHICS4122). All procedures involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the Deanship of Scientific Research.

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Author contributions

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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Competing interests

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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Appendix

Questionnaire on the Needs for English for Academic Purposes Courses among Graduate EFL Students in Saudi Arabia

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Gender: □ Male □ Female
2. Level of study: □ Master's □ Doctoral
3. Field of study: □ Science/Engineering □ Medical/Health □ Business/Management □ Humanities/Social Sciences
4. Years of graduate study: □ 1st year □ 2nd year □ 3rd year □ 4th year or more
5. Previous EAP course experience: □ Yes □ No

Please rate your need for improvement in each area (1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree)

Section B: Academic Skills Needs

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
B1	Academic listening skills (understanding lectures, conferences)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B2	Academic reading skills (understanding research articles)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B3	Academic speaking skills (presentations, seminar discussions)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B4	Academic writing skills (theses, research papers)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B5	Academic translation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section C: Learning Preferences

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
C1	I am motivated to improve my English for academic success	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C2	I prefer to interact with English-native scholars	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C3	I prefer cooperative learning with peers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C4	I prefer to ask teachers for help	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
C5	EAP teachers should understand my discipline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section D: Course Preferences

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
D1	EAP courses should be specific to my discipline	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D2	I prefer diversified classroom activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D3	I prefer authentic simulated exercises	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
D4	I prefer multiple teaching modes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section E: Resources and Materials

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
E1	University should provide financial support for conference	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E2	University should expand English electronic resources	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E3	University should provide self-learning platforms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E4	Materials should emphasize scientific research skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
E5	Materials should develop research communication competence	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section F: Assessment Preference

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
F1	I prefer summative assessment only (final exams)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F2	I prefer formative assessment only (ongoing feedback, portfolios)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
F3	I prefer a combination of formative and summative assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section G: Perceptions of Existing EAP Courses

Item	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
G1	Current EAP courses meet my academic needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G2	Current EAP courses improve my reading skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G3	Current EAP courses improve my writing skills	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
G4	Current EAP courses prepare me for thesis writing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐