INTRODUCING CAES

The Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES) was first established as an independent centre under the name of the English Centre in 1992 to offer quality English support to all undergraduates at the University of Hong Kong (HKU). Since its early years, the Centre has taken on other additional roles such as providing a comprehensive programme to research postgraduate students and offering some teacher development programmes including a Postgraduate Diploma in English Studies, a Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics as well as other in-service courses for schoolteachers by special arrangement with the Education Bureau. It also provides supervision for PhD students in related areas of studies. Although its main mission remains that of English support for undergraduate students, the other developments in the Centre have contributed to its academic vitality.

The adoption of the Centre’s new name coincides with its establishment as a Centre within the Faculty of Arts from July 2008 and, with this organizational move, the Centre is well positioned to develop its curriculum further to support all the students at the University even more comprehensively.

Currently, the Centre offers courses to a total of 7,352 students and provides a language consultation service for another 1,295 students as well. It achieved an overall score of 9.2 out of a full score of 10 in the last Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review and a score of 83.8 out of a full score of 100 in the last Research Assessment Exercise conducted by the University Grants Committee, both of which attest to its excellence.

NEW LEADERSHIP: PROFESSOR KEN HYLAND

In line with the pivotal role the Centre plays in the university curriculum, the University has always entrusted the leadership of the Centre to a world-class scholar in applied English studies. From September 2009, the Centre’s new Director is Professor Ken Hyland, succeeding Professor David Nunan, who led the Centre for over a decade (1994-2007). Professor Hyland is well known around the world for his definitive research in academic and professional literacies in higher education and applied linguistics in general. Prior to joining the Centre, Professor Hyland was Professor of Education in the School of Culture, Language and Communication and Head of the Centre for Professional and Academic Literacies at the Institute of Education, University of London. He has taught applied linguistics and English for Academic Purposes for more than 30 years, working in Britain, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand before moving back to Hong Kong. He has published numerous articles and books on applied linguistics, language education and academic writing and has contributed tremendously to the field as a whole in various professional capacities.

Professor Ken Hyland
Fine Art Discussions provide a unique opportunity for students to take part in a visually-rich learning environment which helps them improve their English, their academic study skills and their Fine Art appreciation.

**English for Mainland Exchange Students**

CAES is taking part in the first Summer Institute Programme, organized by the Faculty of Arts. Our contribution to the programme is a series of courses tailored for a group of mainland exchange students from various universities. ARTS1001 is a course specifically geared towards business writing and presentations. It aims to give students ample opportunity to negotiate and present reports through the context of language. ARTS1004 is designed to maximize students’ opportunities to converse and to learn a variety of strategies that will enhance their conversational skills.

**INTENSIVE ENGLISH FOR POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

The key aim of this compulsory course, which CAES will be piloting in September 2009 with two teachers and 30 students, is to help postgraduate students (from non-English-speaking Universities) improve their academic writing skills. This course will also prepare these students for two other Graduate School courses: Making your Writing Clear, and Introduction to Thesis Writing.

The main aspects of this course are writing and speaking, focusing on helping students produce cohesive and coherent academic texts and presentations. Intensive work on key language areas and common language problems is integrated into a thematic approach using published academic texts as relevant contexts.

The class format of 10 sessions includes group tutorials to allow time for individual feedback and discussion of areas that students need to work on. Self-access work is seen as a key course component and students are given support to help them become effective and independent learners.
experience of their chosen careers, gaining insights into actual job demands and on-the-job English use. Students take responsibility for identifying and contacting workplaces of their own choices and arranging to work-shadow their hosts and observe their daily routines.

Throughout the project, students prepare e-portfolios representing the culmination of their experience and learning, targeting effective self-presentation for professional purposes. At the end of the project, each student gives a reflective oral presentation to classmates on their unique experience.

**ENGLISH FOR PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION FOR HKU STAFF**

CAES started to offer English for Professional Communication courses to administrative and support staff at the university in 2008-2009. In view of the diverse needs and backgrounds of the staff, courses were offered at three levels: Advanced, Intermediate, and Introductory. Each caters to the job-specific needs of a certain category of staff. Almost 180 staff members from the University took these courses over the past academic year. A wide range of job-specific skills were addressed; ranging from handling enquiries, requests, telephone calls, and workplace situational conversations for support staff, to business correspondence, business meetings and speeches for administrative staff. Role-plays, case studies, audio-visual materials and analyses of authentic texts required staff to participate actively in class. To facilitate independent study, self-access materials were also provided. The courses were well received by participants, and more courses and workshops are being planned for the next year.

**SUMMER INSTITUTE IN ARTS AND HUMANITIES**

*English Enhancement Through Fine Art Appreciation*

A new Self-Access workshop called ‘Fine Art Discussions’, began in Semester 1 2008, encouraging HKU students to improve their English through discussing a variety of works of art by famous and lesser-known artists.

The discussions help students to use English in a creative way to describe, critically analyse, interpret, and react to visual images. Through doing this they are improving skills relevant to studying at university such as expressing and explaining opinions in a tutorial or using sources effectively to enhance a written argument. Language input provides a ‘rich vocabulary palette’ that students can draw on when writing or speaking.
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RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Curricular development at the Centre is informed by research in applied linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). The Centre publishes the Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics with researchers at the Centre also serving as members of the editorial boards or reviewers for international journals such as Applied Linguistics. Recent output includes articles in publications such as the Cambridge Journal of Education, English for Specific Purposes, Journal of Asian Pacific Communication, Journal of Second Language Writing, Language Learning Journal and Asian Journal of English Language Teaching.

RECENT PhD GRADUATES

CAES supervises PhD students (both full-time and part-time) in the field of Applied Linguistics. Research topics cover curriculum development, teacher beliefs and practices, learners’ experiences, teacher development as well as language acquisition and discourse analysis. From July 2004 to June 2009, PhD students at CAES have published over 50 journal articles and book chapters and more than 100 conference papers. Some recent graduates include Alice Chik, Nora Hussin, Clarence Wang, Peter Huang and Lillian Wong. All of them have continued to make a contribution to the education sector in Hong Kong and in mainland China.

A VOTE OF THANKS

In the summer of 2009, the Centre bid a fond farewell to Nigel Bruce, who served as Principal Language Instructor in the Centre for over two decades (1987-2009) with absolute dedication. He was born in Scotland and taught English in France, Mongolia, and Kuwait before joining HKU. He made an immense and lasting contribution to the Centre’s work, particularly in developments addressing the indivisible relationship between knowledge and discourse in English-medium education and applications such as the use of concordancers in language teaching.

In the second semester, a special CAES seminar series was organized in order to pay tribute to our long-serving colleague Nigel Bruce and his valuable contributions over the last two decades. Seminar topics covered in this series reflected Nigel’s interests and expertise in many areas of applied linguistics. The highlights of the series were the seminar given by Professor Wolfgang Teubert
from the University of Birmingham entitled “Keywords, Arguments and Formulaic Expressions: the British Eurosceptic Discourse” and one given by Nigel himself, reviewing the historical development of the Centre entitled “Where from to here?: A Structural and Functional History of Academic English Provision at HKU (from 1985)”. Both seminars attracted a very high turnout and were truly inspiring. Other colleagues contributing to this seminar series included Miranda Legg, Louisa Chan, Wilson Chow, Ken Lau and Daniel Churchill from the Faculty of Education.

“Where from to here?” by Nigel Bruce

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