

Title of Project:

(English)	The Importance of Disciplinary Literacy in iGCSE: A Data Driven Study in Hong Kong
(Chinese)	香港專題研究：國際普通中學教育文憑考試中學科讀寫能力的重要性

Writing can be extremely challenging for all learners, especially in the context of writing in exam conditions. Research findings (i.e. Lemke, 1990; Lewis et al, 2020; Jones et. al, 2021; Martin, 2013; Coetze-Lachmann, 2007; Whittaker & McCabe, 2020) confirm that being able to write coherently and convincingly in the style of the discipline, able to write like a scientist, a historian or an artist for secondary school exams is crucial for the success of all learners. Disciplinary literacy, understanding the language requirements, and being able to read, write, and speak the language of a discipline, are vital skills that contribute to effective comprehension of subject matter, and overall academic performance. This core competence is essential in determining students' performance on written assessments. However, there is a lack of understanding regarding discipline-specific literacy practices of writing for exams. The International General Certificate of Secondary Education (iGCSE) exam is a highly recognised international assessment testing students' academic ability and a key gatekeeper for further studies. Although there has been an increasing number of iGCSE candidates in Hong Kong over the years, the disciplinary literacy requirements of this exam have not yet been explored. Both international schools and an increasing number of local schools are now including iGCSE in their school curriculum. For non-JUPAS applicants, the iGCSE results are one of the key criteria for them to gain admission to local universities and higher education institutions overseas. iGCSE is an English language-based assessment offered across a wide range of subject categories. English is the only medium of communication/examination for all candidates regardless of their first language. This unique study in Hong Kong will partner with a larger UK study the British Academic Written English Secondary School Corpus (BAWESS) project based at the University of Bath. This study aims to examine disciplinary literacy and writing development in the iGCSE exam years in Hong Kong to provide original insights that can benefit teaching and learning in Hong Kong. We aim to explore the language patterns that characterise various disciplinary writing of students across different types of schools in Hong Kong. The present study focuses on analysing student texts from all available subjects taught at iGCSE at the participating schools to explore the language features (including registers, genres, and lexicogrammatical patterns) across various disciplines.

This study aims to recruit three different types of schools: international schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools, and private schools. We will collect a minimum of 40 student exam-practice texts from Year 10 and Year 11 students, per subject. Data will be collected from both male and female student participants ranging in age from approximately 14-16 years old. All collected data (approximately 1200 samples of student texts) will be analysed with a focus on disciplinary literacy based on three perspectives: a) Genre—the types of texts that students are required to write; b) Structure—the organization of texts among different HK iGCSE subjects, and c) Grammatical Construction—the common lexico-grammatical features that students use. As a data-driven study, the findings analysis of this research will make an original contribution to the field of applied linguistics and provide the first-ever corpus of writing in the exam years for

iGCSE in Hong Kong. The findings from the study will provide original knowledge about disciplinary language usage, writing development, and disciplinary literacy patterns that will enhance teaching and learning resources in Hong Kong. The unique corpus will be an authentic data set that can be shared for teaching, learning and research purposes.