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EVALUATION OF ACADEMIC WRITING COURSE THROUGH STUDENTS' SURVEY

The article states that the academic writing course is the primary discipline that forms a critical skill necessary for developing students' research skills. Researchers point out that the absence of consistent academic writing practices in Kazakhstan has emerged as an essential issue. Additionally, it is described that this discipline is included in the Doctorate Educational Program. The purpose of the study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the course "Theory and Practice of Academic Writing" and to determine the method of reliable verification of students' feedback. Throughout the study, the authors analyzed student survey responses to assess students' understanding of course material, use of information, and individual learning process. A survey was conducted to analyze the study quantitatively. The survey was taken from the students of Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University. SPSS version 26 was used in the analysis of survey results. The methodological value of the research is determined by the need for future researchers to choose a reliable research method tool when receiving feedback from students at the end of the course, not limited to quantitative methods but also qualitative methods. In the discussion, the article's authors focused on the advantages of a student survey when measuring the course content. The Student Survey is the most common tool for measuring course content worldwide. The authors concluded that combining surveys with qualitative methods allows researchers to obtain comprehensive prospects for the effective functioning of the teaching methodology and the implementation of the course.

Keywords: academic writing, research competences and writing abilities, academic writing strategies, higher education, students' survey, post-soviet Kazakhstan.

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Академиялық жазылым курсы студенттерден сауалнама алу арқылы бағалау

Мақалада академиялық жазылым курсының білім алушылардың зерттеушілік дағдыларын дамыту үшін қажетті маңызды дағдыны қалыптастыруда басты пән екені айтылған. Зерттеушілер академиялық жазылым пәнінің Қазақстанда жүйелі түрде өткізілмеуі қазіргі таңда үлкен мәселеге айналғанына тоқталады. Сонымен қатар аталмыш пән тек докторантура Білім беру бағдарламасында ғана қамтылғаны сипатталған. Зерттеудің мақсаты «Академиялық жазылымның теориясы мен практикасы» курсының тиімділігін бағалау және студенттерден кері байланысын сенімді тексеру әдісін анықтау. Авторлар зерттеу барысында білім алушылардың курс материалын түсінуін, ақпаратты қолдануын және жеке оқу үдерісін бағалау үшін студенттерден алынған сауалнама жауаптарына талдау жасаған. Зерттеуде сандық талдау бойынша сауалнама жүргізілді. Сауалнама Қорқыт Ата атындағы Қызылорда университетінің білім алушыларынан алынды. Сауалнама нәтижелерін талдауда SPSS 26 нұсқасы пайдаланылды. Зерттеудің методологиялық құндылығы болашақ зерттеушілердің курс аяғында студенттерден кері байланыс алуда тек сандық әдіспен шектелмей сапалық әдістерді қоса қолданғанда ғана сенімді зерттеу әдісі құралын таңдау қажеттілігімен айқындалады. Мақала авторлары талқылауда курстың мазмұнын өлшеу кезінде студенттерге жүргізілген сауалнаманың артықшылықтарына тоқталды. Студенттердің сауалнамасы әлемдегі курс мазмұнын өлшеудің ең кең тараған құралы болып саналады. Авторлар сауалнаманы сапалық әдістермен үйлестіру зерттеушілерге оқыту әдістемесінің тиімді жұмыс істеуі мен курсты жүзеге асырудың жан-жақты перспективаларын алуға мүмкіндік береді деген қорытындыға келген.

Түйін сөздер: академиялық жазылым, зерттеу құзыреттіліктері және жазу қабілеттері, академиялық жазылым стратегиялары, жоғары білім, студенттердің сауалнамасы, посткеңестік Қазақстан.

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Оценивание курса академического письма посредством анкетирования студентов

В статье говорится, что курс академического письма является ключевой дисциплиной в формировании у обучающихся важного навыка, необходимого для развития исследовательских навыков. Исследователи отмечают, что отсутствие регулярного академического письма в Казахстане стало большой проблемой. Кроме того, описано, что данная дисциплина входит только в образовательную программу докторантуры. Целью исследования является оценка эффективности курса «Теория и практика академического письма» и определение метода достоверной проверки отзывов студентов. В ходе исследования авторы проанализировали ответы студентов на опрос, чтобы оценить их понимание материала курса, использование информации и индивидуальный процесс обучения. В ходе исследования был проведен опрос для количественного анализа. Опрос был проведен среди студентов Кызылординского университета имени КORKYT Ата. При анализе результатов опроса использовалась SPSS версии 26. Методологическая ценность исследования определяется необходимостью для будущих исследователей выбирать надежный инструмент исследования при получении обратной связи от студентов в конце курса, не ограничиваясь количественными методами, но и качественными методами. В обсуждении авторы статьи остановились на преимуществах опроса студентов при измерении содержания курса. Опрос студентов считается наиболее распространенным инструментом измерения содержания курса в мире. Авторы пришли к выводу, что сочетание анкетирования с качественными методами позволяет исследователям получить всесторонние перспективы эффективного функционирования методологии обучения и реализации курса.

Ключевые слова: академическое письмо, исследовательские компетенции и академические способности, стратегии академического письма, высшее образование, опрос студентов, постсоветский Казахстан.

Introduction

The professional research skills of philologist undergraduate students cover a range of vital skills and qualities required for scholarly inquiry within the sphere of philology. Philologist students must develop a profound understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances, critical analysis, and research methodologies to competently search and comprehend various literary and linguistic phenomena. Research skills also imply formulating research questions, conducting thorough literature reviews, and utilizing appropriate research methods to collect and analyze data. Furthermore, philologist students should reveal competency in academic writing, presenting coherent arguments, interpreting complex texts, and efficiently conveying their results.

In recent years a research activity is one of the priorities of the Government of Kazakhstan. The president of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, repeatedly talked about research in his speeches.

The development of science is a strategic priority for our country. Creating conditions for talented and capable young people to engage in science is especially important. Creativity, innovation, knowledge and passion for science are the main qualities that a truly advanced country needs. As a whole society, we must promote science in every possible way. It is advisable to arouse interest in science from school. As a whole society, we must glorify science and knowledge.

“Now, the time for young scientists has come. The whole country should benefit from the projects you proposed and invented. In short, scientists like you should lead our motherland’s scientific and technological development. Because if science is strong, the state will be vital. Without science, the country will be doomed. And a country with advanced science can overcome any crisis. If science thrives, so does the economy. That is, the welfare of the population will increase. Ultimately, science should make the lives of citizens qualitative and bright. I hope that the state and the scientific com-

munity will work together,” the head of state, K. Tokayev (2024), said.

“Science and education will be one of the main priorities in the creation of New Kazakhstan,” stated Sayasat Nurbek(2022), Minister of Science and Higher Education, in his interview. According to this method, students’ research activity should be one of their development’s primary markers.

The purpose and tasks of the study. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to assess the usefulness of the “Theory and Practice of Academic Writing” course and identify the reliable instrument for measuring students’ feedback.

This research attempts to indicate the following ***tasks***:

- Evaluate students’ survey answers to assess their understanding of course material, application of information, and personal learning process.
- Identify reliable instrument for measuring students’ feedback.

Literature review

Academic writing is a necessary ability for university students to master to complete important components of their studies, such as course assignments, papers, exercises, and theses. According to Knight (2020), academic writing, which is standard procedure in Western colleges and universities and research establishments, is especially important for people employed in learning and research environments who are characterized by autonomous truthfulness and the creation of efficient, persuasive arguments based on verification, assessment, and reasoning.

Academic writing is not taught systematically in developing countries such as Kazakhstan (Tajik, 2024). In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, the British higher education system is being utilized. Nevertheless, academic writing cannot be learned to the required extent. This absence of education in academic writing causes various problems for learners and educators. These concerns increase students’ attempts to handle a foreign educational environment, diverse strategies to learning, and efficient interaction with peers and educators (Zhang et al., 2022).

Additionally, the tricky hookup between writing in native languages and producing an idea in a foreign language enhances the challenges that students face. Furthermore, the refined relation between writing in a national language and creating thought in a foreign language intensifies students’ challenges while writing research papers (Goodman, B. A., & Montgomery, 2020). Respectively, confronting

these challenges and recognizing the importance of academic writing in advancing higher education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan is crucial.

There is an immediate requirement for educational professionals and interested parties to comprehend the importance of this discipline and the struggle for its broad implementation in higher education educational programs throughout Kazakhstan. Given the existing pedagogical surroundings, it is readily apparent that excellent academic writing is currently available in a small number of accredited private institutions in Kazakhstan. In Kazakhstan, academic writing is held only for doctoral students at state universities. Academic writing is not included in the educational program for master’s and bachelor’s degrees at state universities. The academic writing course is included in the educational programs for both master’s and bachelor’s degrees at Kazakhstani national universities. Furthermore, accredited public institutions usually exclude academic writing from the bachelor educational programs, particularly as a separate subject or combined with related fields.

A special case is Korkyt Ata Kyzylorda University, which included an academic writing course in the educational program for second-year Kazakh Language and Literature students during the course of the academic year 2022-2023, admittedly as an experiment. It is critical to reflect on the course’s usefulness and determine whether it corresponds to the academic writing requirements commonly encountered at higher-ranking Western educational institutions.

Good academic writing skills are relevant for students to succeed in their future pathways after undergraduate studies, whether they complete a Master’s or PhD degree. Postgraduate admissions often require evidence of academic writing abilities. Academic staff might assume that Master’s-level students already write in an accomplished way. At the same time, it is widely agreed that many graduate students recognize academic writing demanding and stressful (Baker, 2021). They frequently turn to their university educators for guidance and encouragement. Students’ inexperience and lack of proficiency in academic writing skills shows the necessity for universities to specify sufficient assistance and resources in this area. Moreover, skills in academic writing might have a significant impact on PhD students’ strategies for thesis writing, explanations for achievement and failure, willingness to enhance academic literacy abilities, and practical writing techniques and methodologies (Lonka, 2014).

The academic writing course strengthens students' research competencies and writing abilities. The course equips students with the resources and information needed to perform good research, evaluate data, and academically articulate the results. Additionally, enrolling in the course increases the ability of learners to think critically by educating them on how to assess and interpret data gathered from various sources (Kostopoulou, 2021). Mastering the academic writing course improves students' ability to correctly cite sources of information, preventing copying and maintaining academic honesty. The academic writing course gives students the key knowledge and abilities required to flourish in their research activities and achieve in their professional endeavors (Heron, 2021).

According to the study, the Academic writing course successfully dealt with the challenges students face in producing research papers. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the significance of educational facilities for academic writing growth and non-institutional aspects, such as interaction among peers, in promoting the achievement of learners with the writing technique (Gopee & Deane, 2013). The academic writing course teaches learners how to successfully grow as researchers in an environment of different circumstances and expectations.

Designing and developing a course in academic writing requires innovation and creativity to engage students' interests. Scholars have outlined ten successful strategies (Mallia, 2017):

1. Modeling: Give students examples of successful academic writing and highlight its important features (Wingate, 2012).

2. Peer feedback and revision: Empower students to provide feedback on each other's papers and revise accordingly (Gopee & Deane, 2013).

3. Genre analysis: Educate learners about academic writing genres and rhetorical tactics, including specific conventions (Wingate, 2012).

4. Reading and analysis: Employ and debate academic papers, assessing the structure of the texts, arguments and examples (Farid & Asmawi, 2019).

5. Writing process: Teach students to brainstorm, outline, draft, revise, and edit (Shrestha, 2020).

6. Workshops: Students should be allowed to take part in writing assignments and receive feedback from the instructor (Jusslin, 2024).

7. Vocabulary growth and progress: Underline the importance of using sufficient academic language and offer strategies for students to reinforce their terminology (Castillo-Martínez & Ramírez-Montoya, 2021).

8. Grammar and sentence structure: Instruct students on the basic principles of syntax, phrase arrangement, and punctuation to guide them in writing clearly and efficiently.

9. Choosing the proper methodology: When teaching students how to choose the best research methodology for their academic writing, it is critical to lead them through the entire process. Training starts by stating the research problem and analyzing current literature to determine the methodologies used in similar investigations. It is critical to analyze the underlying methodological and ethical principles of qualitative and quantitative research frameworks and the data types needed for their analysis (Blair, 2016).

10. Summary writing: Tell the students to submit a summary on class completion. This strategy assists students in focusing on the class/lecture, and by collecting the summaries; teachers will be able to determine what the students remembered from each lesson and whether they noted the key learnings (Fitzmaurice, 2013).

A well-structured academic writing course syllabus should contain these ten strategies.

Research materials and methods

Students completed the survey at the end of the course "Theory and practices of Academic writing" to establish their level of prior knowledge of the scientific literature; the research process; scientific writing; and presentation of scientific material. The primary aim was to assess the effectiveness of the course components and to identify areas for improvement. The survey was conducted in Kazakhstan via electronic format using Google Forms. 61 from 73 participants completed it. It consisted of 22 questions using a Likert-style scale, from the lowest (least important/very difficult/least preferable) to the highest (most important/very easy/most preferable). The survey was split into four sections: A–D. A: scientific literature; B: research process; C: scientific writing; D: presentation of scientific material.

Part A–D focused on the students' search of the scientific literature and identification of sources for each section of their academic work. Part B asked students about the goal and objectives, the structure, methodology and strategies, data collection, data analysis, and the results of the academic work. Part C needed students' responses based on the academic style of research papers/dissertations, writing the abstract, an introduction, methodology, results/analysis, conclusion and the list of used literature. Part D

included questions concerning the preparation of the oral presentations, the originality of the research, the presentation of results, oral presentation, the differ-

ence in language register between a poster and oral presentation. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics using SPSS version 26 (see table 1).

Table 1
Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	1,00	45	73,8	73,8	73,8
	2,00	10	16,4	16,4	90,2
	3,00	1	1,6	1,6	91,8
	5,00	5	8,2	8,2	100,0
	Bcero	61	100,0	100,0	

Source / Note: This table was compiled by the authors based on the analysis of materials

Table 1 contains information about frequency, percentage, valid and accumulated percentage based on respondents' valid answers.

Results and discussion

The primary goal of the survey's data analysis was to assess respondents' confidence and familiarity with various aspects of academic writing and presentation. We developed the survey to collect information from students who studied the course "Theory and Practice of Academic Writing." The survey questionnaire included questions related to students' knowledge of scientific literature, their ability to find suitable sources for research, and their understanding of the research process. Here is an analysis of each section (see Table 1).

A. Scientific literature

More than 75% of respondents claimed to know where to find information for their coursework or research work. Additionally, over 70% were confident in finding information for every aspect of their work. However, only a tiny percentage (15%) knew where to find information for each course or research paper section. This suggests that while students may be familiar with the overall research process, they may lack a complete understanding of collecting relevant information for the diverse sections of their research. It also focuses on the need for targeted assistance in these specific areas.

B. The research process

While about 74% of students felt confident when writing the purpose and objectives of their articles, and the majority (approximately 65%) knew how to

structure their articles, there is a clear need for additional support in writing methodology sections, as only around half (approximately 51%) felt confident in this area.

C. Scientific Writing

About 75% confidently wrote their coursework or research work academically. While most respondents were confident in writing introductions and conclusions, a smaller proportion (around 49%) felt confident writing sections on methodology.

D. Presentation of scientific material

While about 62% of students felt confident when making plans of oral presentations for their research work, and more than 65% believed they could demonstrate the originality of their research, it's crucial to note that most respondents understood the difference between a poster and a presentation and felt confident when creating research posters. This understanding is a key aspect of comprehensive knowledge in scientific writing. Respondents generally felt confident finding information, writing academically, and presenting their research. However, there was a noticeable dip in confidence in writing methodological sections and designing scientific posters (See Table 2).

Table 2 provides a detailed overview of students' responses to 22 statements. From Table 3, we can see that a large majority, 40 (65.6%) of the respondents, feel confident in structuring course papers or research work. 16 (26.2%) agreed more than disagreed, 3 (4.9%) disagreed more than agreed, and only 2 (3.3%) found the question difficult to answer. This small percentage of students struggling should give us hope about the overall student performance.

Table 2*The students' responses to the survey statements*

Survey Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	It's hard for me to answer
A	Scientific literature					
1	I know where to look for information for course paper/research paper	75.40%	15%	1.60%	8.20%	0.00%
2	I know where to look for information for each section of a course paper/research paper	72.10%	14.80%	6.60%	6.60%	0%
B	The research process					
1	I know how the purpose and objectives of the course paper/research paper are written	73.80%	16.40%	6.60%	3.30%	0%
2	I know how the structure of the course paper/ research paper is written	65.60%	26.20%	4.90%	3.30%	0%
3	I know how to write a methodology section of a course paper/research paper	50.80%	32.80%	9.80%	6.60%	0%
4	I know what methods are carried out in the course paper/research paper	63.90%	23.00%	4.90%	8.20%	0%
5	I know how to collect data for a course paper/ research paper	63.90%	29.50%	1.60%	4.90%	0%
6	I know how to carry out data analysis/I know how to analyze data	63.90%	26.20%	3.30%	6.60%	0%
7	I know how to present the results of a course paper/research paper	67.20%	23.00%	3.30%	1.60%	4.90%
C	Scientific writing					
1	I know how to write a course paper/research paper in a scientific style	75.40%	19.70%	1.60%	3.30%	0%
2	I know how to write an abstract/I can write an abstract	63.90%	24.60%	3.30%	8.20%	0%
3	I know how to write an introduction	78.70%	16.40%	1.60%	3.30%	0%
4	I know how to write a methodology section	49.20%	29.50%	13.10%	1.60%	6.60%
5	I know how to write the main part	68.90%	21.30%	3.30%	1.60%	4.90%
6	I know how to write a conclusion	73.80%	16.40%	4.90%	1.60%	3.30%
7	I know how to prepare a bibliography	77.00%	16.40%	1.60%	4.90%	0.00%
D	Presentation of Scientific material					
1	I can prepare an oral presentation for a piece of research work	62.30%	24.60%	6.60%	1.60%	5%
2	I can demonstrate the originality of a piece of research work	65.50%	19.70%	8.20%	6.60%	0.00%
3	I know how to prepare a presentation to present the results of a piece of research work	70.50%	24.60%	1.60%	3.30%	0%
4	I can confidently defend my research work	75.40%	18%	3.30%	1.60%	1.60%
5	I know the difference between a poster and a presentation	68.90%	23%	4.90%	1.60%	1.60%
6	I know how to design a scientific poster/ I can design a scientific poster	65.60%	23.00%	7%	1.60%	3.30%

Source / Note: This table was compiled by the authors based on the analysis of materials

Table 3*I know how the structure of course paper/scientific work is written*

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	I completely agree	40	65,6	65,6
	I agree more than disagree	16	26,2	91,8
	I disagree more than agree	3	4,9	96,7
	It's hard for me to answer	2	3,3	100,0
	Bcero	61	100,0	

*Source / Note: This table was compiled by the authors based on the analysis of materials***Table 4***I know how to write a methodology section*

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Accumulated percentage
Valid	I completely agree	30	49,2	49,2
	I agree more than disagree	18	29,5	78,7
	I disagree more than agree	8	13,1	91,8
	I completely disagree	1	1,6	93,4
	It's hard for me to answer	4	6,6	100,0
	Bcero	61	100,0	

Source / Note: This table was compiled by the authors based on the analysis of materials

Table 4 demonstrates the respondents' results regarding their awareness of the methodology section. From the table above, we can see that 30 (49,2%) fully agreed, 18 (29,5%) agreed more than disagreed, 8 (13,1%) disagreed more than agreed, only 1 (1,6%) totally disagreed, and 4 (6,6%) participants had difficulties responding.

The usefulness of the Student Survey in measuring course content is the focus of discussion and investigation. Students' surveys are considered the most common instrument for measuring course content worldwide. This is because student surveys are easy to spread and analyse, less time and financially consuming. While student surveys can give helpful information about students' opinions and experiences regarding the course's material, they may not be the primary or the most significant indicator to evaluate the material of the learning process (Hassad, 2018).

However, the survey is frequently opposed by both staff and undergraduates. For learners, because they complete the survey after their final year, there is no "benefit" to them from improvements implemented as a result of what may be judged unsatisfactory results on specific subjects. For educators,

it is frequently applied as a rigid tool for departments, proposing such broad data that individuals cannot respond the outcomes. Instructors find this inflexibility challenging as it restricts their ability to change their teaching approaches to the specific requirements of their students. Researchers are often wary of survey tools primarily utilized by external authorities to evaluate faculties and the quality of data supplied, mainly due to the apparent absence of reliability of the survey in question (Harvey, 2003).

Current research results show that students responded positively to questions based on A–D. Their positive responses to a: scientific literature; B: research process; C: scientific writing; D: presentation of scientific material, indicate the effectiveness of the survey in these areas.

Multiple assessments, including assignments, exams, and classroom observations, may be required for the final evaluation of understanding and consolidation of knowledge. Student surveys can provide significant insight into how students are assimilating learning material. However, they should be combined with additional assessment methods to provide a better assessment of understanding of the content (Kanwar, 2022).

Conclusion

A survey was employed to assess students' learning outcomes, particularly aimed at determining their prior knowledge on scientific literature, the research process, scientific writing and the presentation of scientific material. The results obtained indicate that students responded positively to all survey questions. This may be attributed to the infrequent exposure of Kazakh students to surveys, which may result in hesitation to provide honest answers. It is encouraging to note that most respondents demonstrated confidence in searching for academic literature, structuring research papers, and presenting their findings. Most students also felt confident in writing introductions and conclusions, as well as planning oral presentations, indicating a durable foundation in core academic writing and communication skills.

However, the results also highlight specific gaps that require urgent attention. A considerable proportion of students expressed uncertainty when it came to researching individual sections of their research papers and writing the methodology section. Confidence levels were also lower when designing research posters compared to other aspects of the research presentation. These results highlight the need for targeted support and additional training, particularly in the areas of methodology and research strategies specific to each section.

Addressing these gaps through targeted training and resources could further enhance students' academic writing competencies and better prepare them for advanced research tasks. The role of faculty in this process is critical, and ongoing evaluation and adaptation of the academic writing curriculum will be essential to developing comprehensive research skills among students at Kazakhstani universities.

Therefore, in the future, after completing the course, students will be asked not only a survey but also to combine it with qualitative methods, includ-

ing observation, interviews, written assignments, etc.

This research also makes a methodological contribution. The study has shown that the survey analysis is not fully a reliable research instrument in getting feedback from students. That is why the researchers will utilize it in future in combination with qualitative research approaches such as focus-group interview, written assignment, observation, field notes, etc. Combining survey with qualitative methods will allow academics to acquire multifaceted perspectives into the efficient functioning of their teaching techniques and course implementation.

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Conflict of interests

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Author contributions

Elmira Ibragimova wrote the original draft, conducted the primary experiments, developed the methodology, critically reviewed and edited the manuscript.

Zharkynbike Suleimenova conceived and designed the study. She supervised the literature review, helping develop the methodology.

Assiya Almutova analyzed the data and performed the statistical analysis and reviewed and edited the manuscript.

Natalya Khegay helped collect the data and conduct primary experiments.

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