

## ESL TERTIARY STUDENTS' WRITING NEEDS: A FRAMEWORK FOR A SUPPLEMENTARY ONLINE WRITING PROGRAM

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### Abstract

This article discusses the elements essential for developing a supplementary online writing program for tertiary students of English as a Second Language (ESL) at University Teknologi MARA, Johor Branch, on the basis of a framework derived from the results of a needs-analysis study. The participants in this study were sixty Part Three Diploma students taking the BEL 311 compulsory general English proficiency course, and four writing lecturers, each of whom had taught the course for more than five years. The students filled out a needs-analysis questionnaire; the lecturers were interviewed. The findings revealed not only learning and writing problems among students but also, most importantly, the elements that are perceived by students and lectures as essential for developing a supplementary online writing program. These elements include aspects pertaining to critical thinking, autonomous learning, social interaction, and learner interest.

**Keywords:** ESL, needs analysis (NA), online writing program

### INTRODUCTION

Although the benefits of needs analysis have been well documented in English as a Second Language (ESL) research, studies on needs analysis in the literature mostly concentrate on English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Seedhouse, 1995; Stapa & Jais, 2005; Adzmi, 2009); few studies have been conducted on general English writing-proficiency courses (Seedhouse, 1995; Kaewpet, 2009), particularly those that focus on the concept of an additional or supplementary online learning environment (Isa, Samah, and Jusoff, 2008; Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, and Muthusamy, 2010). This article outlines the framework for a supplementary ESL online writing program that can be used as a basis for developing similar programs elsewhere.

### Background

Presently, many ESL students, even at the tertiary level, often get stuck while writing (Reid, 1993; Ismail et al., 2008) are unable to write critically, are disinterested in writing, and have a poor attitude towards writing (Osman & Bakar, 2009). Lack of critical-thinking skills has resulted in a lack of in-depth content in student writings and in dull presentation in essays. This is true for many tertiary-level ESL students including those from University Teknologi MARA (UiTM), the biggest public university in Malaysia. Choo (2001) surveyed UiTM

lecturers to gather their opinions regarding writing problems among UiTM students. According to Choo, most of the lecturers revealed that their students mostly score poorly in writing examinations or, at best, perform at a mediocre level. Further, in a study conducted by Ismail et al. (2010) regarding the writing problems of tertiary-level ESL students, it was revealed that the many problems students face in writing concern not only their weaknesses in the language but, more importantly, their inability to think critically when writing, which contributes to their poor writing performance. Therefore, tertiary-level ESL students need to be guided and trained to think critically when writing and given ample time to practice writing.

Regarding the attitudes of ESL students towards writing, Reid (1993) contends that one of the most prominent factors affecting the success of students in college-level composition is their interest in and attitude towards the writing task. Therefore, how the students feel about and react to their writing tasks greatly determines the quality of their compositions. Results of a study by Ismail et al. (2010) conducted at UiTM indicated that many students have negative attitudes towards writing: they often procrastinate, are careless when writing, and are lazy about and disinterested in writing. In addition, writing apprehension (i.e. the fear or anxiety that occurs in some students when they attempt to write) has also been reported to impede the quality of writings generated by ESL students (Walsh 1986; Ismail et al., 2010).

In addition, the writing problems of many tertiary-level ESL students occur mostly due to ineffective writing activities or modules (Ismail, 2010) lack of writing practise in class (Adzmi, 2009) lack of proper guidance and scaffolding (Hussin, 2008) and lack of learner discussions and autonomy (Yih & Nah, 2009). Therefore, to enhance writing skills and interest in writing among ESL students, many researchers suggest that, to help them write successfully, students should be given suitable guidance and scaffolding (Hussin, 2008), lots of writing practice (Darus, 2008), and discussions and feedback (Ismail, Maulan, & Hassan, 2008) preferably taking place online at the pace and time dictated by students themselves. Hence, it is important to provide students with a chance to participate in an interesting and effective online writing program that can cater to their writing needs and deficiencies.

### **Needs Analysis and Developing a Supplementary Online Writing Program**

It is imperative to note that before an effective program is designed, it is important to determine the needs of students, particularly by means of a needs-analysis study. This tool helps to determine the needs, readiness, and awareness level of tertiary-level students for a course or program designed for them (Seedhouse, 1995). The needs analysis discussed in this article seeks to discover the opinions of participants regarding their writing strengths and weaknesses and, most importantly, their perception of what constitutes a strong online writing program that can cater to their needs. The needs-analysis study also obtains feedback by means of interviews from four selected lecturers, each of whom has taught the BEL 311 course for more than five years; these lecturers can be considered experts in the course. Therefore, the view of the lecturers regarding the writing needs of students, and the elements that are important and useful in designing the content of an effective online writing program are considered. Thus, all the data gathered from this needs analysis will be taken into account when designing the IQ-Write program module.

The IQ-Write program is a proposed supplementary online writing program to be designed and developed at the Johor Branch of UiTM to help BEL 311 students enhance their academic writing abilities. In this article, the results of our needs-analysis study, along with the related relevant learning theories which comprise the framework for the proposed supplementary online writing program, will be discussed further in the 'Findings and Discussion' section. Hence, the findings of this study will be used not only as the basis for developing the IQ-Write program but also other similar online writing programs with similar types of target students.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVE**

This article analyses the writing problems and needs of tertiary-level ESL students taking the BEL 311 general English proficiency course at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Johor Branch, [CITY], Malaysia, on the basis of the results of a needs-analysis study. It also outlines the framework for a supplementary online writing program known as IQ-Write, which will be developed for BEL 311 students based on findings from the needs-analysis study. Although some previous studies have proposed a framework for online writing activities, most only emphasize a specific online activity or tool such as an e-forum (Chan & Yap, 2008; Hussin, 2008) rather than an entire program containing more than one type of online tool or activity.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Instruments and Data Analysis**

The main research instruments used in the study are the questionnaires administered to students and the interview questions posed to writing instructors/lecturers. These are used as needs-analysis instruments to discover the writing problems, needs, and attitudes of BEL 311 students.

#### **1. Student Questionnaire**

This questionnaire was used to gather data regarding the learning problems and needs of students in the BEL 311 writing course, as well as the suggestions and opinions of these students regarding ways to enhance their interest in learning and their writing ability through the course. The first portion of the survey questions uses the Likert scale; the second consists of open-ended questions. The questionnaire was randomly administered to 60 student participants out of the total population of 200 Part Three Diploma students taking BEL 311 at UiTM, Johor Branch. The survey questionnaire was first completed by a pilot group of 30 students before the actual treatment. The data gathered from the completed questionnaires were tabulated and analysed descriptively.

#### **2. Interview Questions Posed to Writing Instructors and Lecturers**

Four of seven writing instructors currently teaching BEL 311 volunteered to be interviewed for the study. These instructors were senior lecturers, each of whom had teaching experience of more than ten years and had been teaching BEL 311 for more than five years. The lecturers were asked to describe the writing problems and needs of their students and to identify important elements for the IQ-Write program. The interview questions were open-ended. The data were recorded, transcribed, and analysed descriptively.

## **FINDINGS & DISCUSSION**

The findings from the study are discussed in three sections. The first section discusses the difficulties and problems students face in writing and learning to write in the BEL 311 course. The second section describes the essential elements for the proposed supplementary online writing program IQ-Write, based on the writing needs of students as suggested by the students and lecturers. The last section outlines the suggested conceptual framework for the IQ-Write program, which is based on the findings from these needs-analysis data and relevant learning theories.

## Problems faced by BEL 311 students

The findings revealed that the students and the lecturers claimed that the inability of students to think critically during their writing process or to question their writing steps affects their writing quality. Also, students and lecturers perceive that the other major problems in learning to write in the BEL 311 course include lack of learner autonomy, limited opportunities for the students to interact socially and discuss their writing, and lack of interest among the students in learning academic writing.

### i) Lack of critical thinking

#### a) Survey results

When asked to rank the types of academic writing areas according to which they have problems with and which they most prefer to learn, only 30% of respondents selected the ability to write critically and to be inquisitive and think critically during their writing process as the area about which they would most prefer to learn.

#### b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*So they need to think and stop to question themselves, 'Am I doing it the right way?', 'Is this sentence structure correct; if not, what is the better structure?' you know...question and be critical of every step, of everything they do during the writing process. (L2)*

### ii) Lack of learner autonomy

#### a) Survey results

When asked whether students need to practice writing more autonomously outside of class time, most of them (80.0%) agreed that the opportunity to do so online could help them to enhance their writing ability and interest.

#### b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*They need to be able to question themselves and be critical of their writing process, you know, not just spoon-feed them with instructions and information like we have in the textbooks and materials used at present because, err...they are not so effective and well, you see...these cannot train them to be critical or autonomous in learning to write. (L2)*

### iii) Lack of social interactions and discussions

#### a) Survey results

Students also suggested that the program should provide them with the opportunity to reflect on and to discuss their writing process through a special blog and e-forum (95.3%)

- b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*So the suggestion to develop this IQ-Write program is very good in my opinion because [students] can have the chance to discuss online with their friends through blogs and forum; this is important because [of the] lack of time or opportunity to do so in class, face to face. (L1)*

- iv) Lack of interest in learning to write

- a) Survey results

Regarding problems in learning to write in the BEL 311 course, most students (75.6%) revealed that the course module and activities conducted in class are not very effective because they are not interesting and do not motivate them to learn writing.

- b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*They don't really enjoy writing in BEL 311; [they] feel it's difficult. I think it's the textbooks and maybe [that] the course's writing instruction or method [is] ineffective and boring to them so they are not too interested [in trying] harder; you know, this makes the lessons hard for them. (L1).*

To enhance the writing abilities of BEL 311 students, the participants suggested that the students be provided with a good supplementary online writing program. In addition, in the needs-analysis data, the students and lecturers described the essential elements of an effective supplementary online writing program that can cater to the writing needs of students. They suggested that the proposed IQ-Write program must include learning elements that can guide students to be critical of their writing process, allow students to be autonomous in learning to write, provide them with the opportunity for social interaction and online discussions, and be interesting to the students and motivate them to learn writing. Results from the survey and sample excerpts from the interview regarding these findings are as follows:

- 1) The program must allow students to be able to be critical of their writing process.

- a) Survey results

Most students (86.6 %) suggested that the BEL 311 course be supplemented with an online writing program that can guide them to be critical of their writing process.

- b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*So I feel, err...there is the need to design one special online writing program for our students which [will] provide a suitable guide for our students to write critically or be critical during their writing process (L1)*

- 2) The program must allow students to be autonomous in learning to write. To this purpose, it must be online-based as well as provide suitable online writing tools, guides, and good writing links and resources.

a) Survey results

When asked whether students need to practice writing more autonomously outside of class time, most of them (80.0%) agreed that the opportunity to do so online could help them enhance their writing ability. In addition, most of them (78%) opined that a good online writing program should provide suitable writing tools, guides, links, and resources.

b) Excerpts from interviews of the lecturers

*Yes, definitely, having all the online writing links and resources will help if the program is complete like, you know...with links to [an] online dictionary, thesaurus, grammar, spell-checker, and so on; it can help to facilitate their writing and reduce their lack of interest [and] time and even [their] negative attitude towards writing. (L2)*

3) The program should provide the students the opportunity for social interaction and online discussions.

a) Survey findings

When asked whether students prefer to discuss writing online, most of them (80.0%) agree that the opportunity to do so through blogs and e-forums can help them to enhance their writing abilities and interest.

b) Excerpt from interviews of the lecturers

*So yes, I think an online writing program will be very interesting and very beneficial for our students. Because this is the 'in thing' for them now, you know. So, I am happy that this IQ-Write program is being developed for them. As a writing lecturer, I suggest that this online writing program be equipped with [a] suitable e-forum and blog for our students, which they can use to discuss and provide or receive feedback on their writing tasks and exercises. If so, I think they would benefit and will find this IQ-Write program interesting. (L3)*

4) The program must be interesting to the students and motivate them to learn writing.

a) Survey findings

Most students (86.6 %) suggested they would only be interested in participating in the supplementary online writing program if the elements of the program, such as an interesting and suitable blog, an e-forum, and other online resources, are interesting to use and can motivate them to learn writing.

b) Excerpt from interviews of the lecturers

*A special online writing course or program is good for them. Yes! Definitely it would help...provided that they must be made to get attached to this online program...so it must not only be related to their BEL 311 syllabus but also must have interesting online learning tools such as [an] e-forum and [a] blog that are specially developed for them, as well as some interesting links and resources on writing that they can use to help them improve their writing. (L1)*

These findings support those of other recent researchers in online learning, such as Fellner (2006), Hussin (2008) and Yih and Nah (2009), on the importance of suitable online learning tools for ESL students. However, these past studies have not proposed a structured or proper framework that can be used as a basis for developing a supplementary online writing program for tertiary-level ESL students.

## **Framework for a Supplementary Online Writing Program for Tertiary-Level ESL Students**

Based on the findings from the needs-assessment data, a conceptual framework for a supplementary online writing program is outlined. This framework is used as a basis in designing a new supplementary online writing program known as the Online IQ-Write program, which is currently being developed for BEL 311 students at UiTM, Johor Branch. This framework can also serve as the basis for developing similar online writing programs for tertiary-level ESL students with similar writing levels and needs. It is important to note that the IQ-Write program framework is strongly influenced by the contributing cognitive, social, and affective factors. These factors directly and indirectly relate to the four core elements found to be essential for BEL 311 students, as derived from the needs-analysis data, namely, critical thinking, autonomous learning, learner interest, and social interaction.

### **a) Cognitive Factors and Critical Thinking**

From the data obtained in the needs-analysis study, it was found that tertiary-level ESL students taking the BEL 311 course lack the ability to think critically when writing and need to be guided to do so during their writing process. To serve this need, one of the fundamental aspects of the IQ-Write program relates to the cognitive theory that focuses on the mental development of the student writer. For this reason, the writing activities will strongly emphasize the cognitive approach to writing. One such means is by incorporating Recursive-Cognitive Process writing activities (Flower & Hayes, 1981) in the program, whereby students should be encouraged to review all their writing stages and to rethink and revise their writing until they reach a stage in which they are totally satisfied and ready to publish.

Moreover, in relation to the constructive mental development of students, it is also important to stress inquisitive and critical thinking (Bruce & Davidson, 1996). Thus, an application of the inquiry-based learning method in the IQ-Write program is deemed necessary because it emphasizes exploration through questioning. As posited by Bruce and Davidson (1996; 285) 'each question leads to an exploration, which in turn leads to more questions to investigate.' This occurs because, in a good writing course, students should be encouraged to think critically during their writing process and to think for themselves. Hence, in the IQ-Write program, BEL 311 students will take the initiative to be self-inquisitive, to explore, and to develop their own writing during their writing process with some guidance from the program through the online IQ-Write Composing Guide (Appendix A).

### **b) Autonomous Learning**

A significant aspect of online learning is that it enables learners to be more autonomous (Cotterall, 2004), which is especially important in learning to write. As discussed earlier in this article, BEL 311 students need to spend more time practicing writing at their own pace and time outside of their limited class time because the more they write, the greater their chances for improvement. For this reason, the supplementary online writing program IQ-Write will be available to all students at all times because it can be accessed online and allows students the unlimited opportunity to write and express their ideas. Moreover, having

an online writing program with structured and well-planned e-forum and blog features allows students to write at their own speed and time, in an autonomous fashion and as often as they are motivated to do so (Chan & Yap, 2008). Hence, to cater to this need, the IQ-Write program is equipped with suitable online tools such as the IQ-Write Blog and e-Forum, which are specially designed and structured to suit the writing levels and needs of BEL 311 students.

In addition, to encourage learner autonomy and self-directedness rather than spoon-feeding them, IQ-Write program participants will be encouraged to follow the complete writing guidelines available in the IQ-Write Composing Guide. In addition, students can select and make use of the many online writing materials and resources, which are recommended by BEL 311 writing lecturers, available in this program. They can do this on their own and only seek help from their writing instructors when necessary. This is in line with the autonomous learner model, which stresses 'the growth of students as independent, self-directed learners with the development of skills, concepts, and [a] positive attitude within the cognitive, emotional, social and physical domains' (Betts & Kercher, 1999; 43).

### **c) Social Factors and Social Interaction among Learners**

Recognizing the needs of BEL 311 students for constructive social interactions, social constructivist elements also form the basis of the IQ-Write program, whereby students will be guided and assisted in their writing tasks in a constructive way. This is in line with the computer-based learning method, in which it is recommended that student writers be involved in online social interactions; constructivists claim that through social interaction, learners are able to actively construct their own meaning (Glaserfeld, 1995). Further, the IQ-Write program stresses learner guidance and assistance (i.e. scaffolding), as proposed by the 'Vygotsky Zone of Proximal Development' (ZPD) (1978) because BEL 311 students need lots of guidance in their writing, as discussed in the findings. Moreover, Chan and Yap (2008; 2) reiterate the following:

*The present CALL materials are unable to interact realistically and meaningfully with students and to provide the motivation for students to write. Students require human interaction, [an] audience, creative ideas, and conviction to develop as writers. Conventional CALL models are unable to meet these demands. Thus, it is not surprising that there is a scarcity of CALL courseware that can effectively teach writing.*

Therefore, the presence of the writing teacher is necessary to guide students during their writing process. For this reason, although the IQ-Write program module and activities can be accessed online, the teacher will be present during class time as well as be available online through an e-forum to guide and facilitate. In addition, peer interaction and discussion through the e-Forum and blog of IQ-Write will provide the necessary scaffolding that can help students increase their ZPD (Hussin, 2008). Hence, in the e-form and blog of the Online IQ-Write program, BEL 311 students will have the chance to collaborate in their writing tasks, whereby they can be involved in synchronous and asynchronous discussions regarding their writing topic and activities.

### **d) Affective Factors and Learner Interest**

Another important aspect that needs to be considered in developing an effective online writing program is the interest level of students in using the program. In the needs-analysis data, it was revealed that BEL 311 students and lecturers claim that the interest level of students must be considered when designing an online writing program for the course.



This finding concurs with the affective filter hypothesis developed by Krashen (1985), who proposes that second-language learners can only acquire language in a non-threatening learning environment. In this sense, it is important for ESL writing teachers to try to reduce the stress associated with learning to write by taking into account the interest level and motivation of students. Moreover, Reid (1993) contends that one of the most prominent factors affecting the success of students in college composition courses is their attitude towards their writing tasks. Therefore, how the students feel about and react towards their writing tasks greatly determines the quality of their compositions. Further, it is important to note that many ESL students view writing as a formidable task and become apprehensive when presented with a writing task; thus, they often refuse to spend time on writing (Rankin-Brown, 2006). The problems of writing difficulty and apprehension toward writing can become more intense at the tertiary level, in which students are expected to write with more maturity and sophistication to match their perceived level of intellect. In addition, they not only need to write for their English proficiency course but also for their specialized course assignments, as is the case for BEL 311 students (Adzmi, 2009).

For this reasons, providing a writing module that can increase the interest of BEL 311 students in writing and can motivate them to practice writing voluntarily and with enthusiasm is deemed to be imperative (Yih & Nah, 2009). In the IQ-Write program, social networking through the e-Forum will be essential to and required of all participants. This activity will allow students to collaborate in writing and to discuss any difficulties related to their writing tasks with their peers. In addition, IQ-Write blog writing will also provide a strong sense of audience and a purpose for writing, both of which are essential to further motivate students to write. Further, the interests and needs of learners will also be considered in the writing guides, instructions, and materials chosen for the IQ-Write program.

## CONCLUSION

This article highlights not only the problems, lacks, and needs of tertiary-level ESL student writers but also suggests a framework that can be used as a basis for developing a suitable supplementary online writing program, such as the IQ-Write program, that can suit the learning and writing needs of students. The design and development of the right online writing program is seen as crucial to satisfy the needs of tertiary-level ESL students to enhance their writing ability and to spur their enthusiasm for writing. The elements suggested in the framework are derived from the findings of the needs-analysis study based on the writing lacks and needs of students, as well as relevant learning theories. Further, the suggested framework can also serve as a model for developing similar online writing programs for other tertiary-level ESL students with similar writing needs.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Features of the Online Composition Guide in the IQ-Write Program**

The IQ-Write Composing Guide, which will be included as an important element in the proposed IQ-Write Program, consists of seven writing steps that the students need to follow (in a recursive manner because the program uses the process-writing approach). These steps are as follows:

1. **ASK**—Students will inquire about their aims for writing the essay or the assigned paper and how they are going to achieve those aims.
2. **FOCUS**—Students need to answer some important questions pertaining to their topic and scope.
3. **SEEK**—Students seek information regarding their topic and must think about choosing the right materials and resources.
4. **PRODUCE**—When producing or writing their drafts, students are encouraged to think critically and about producing relevant and interesting contents or ideas for their essay.
5. **CORRECT**—Students must proofread and revise their work; to help them do so carefully, they must answer some important questions and fill out some important checklists.
6. **EVALUATE**—Students are to evaluate one another's work; they are given a set of questions and checklist to help them complete this step.
7. **REFLECT**—When students have completed their essays, they are encouraged to reflect on their writing process through self-inquiry to ascertain their writing strengths and to target their weaknesses for improvement.

## APPENDIX B

### Student Survey (Needs-Analysis) Questionnaire

#### PART 1

##### Demographic Information

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Age:

3. Diploma in:

Accounting

Transportation

Business and Management

Other

Finance

Science and Computer

Science and Quantitative

#### PART 2

##### A. My learning style

	Statement	Tick (/) where applicable
1.	I was exposed to learning using computers and the Internet when I was in secondary school.	
2.	I like to learn autonomously with some facilitation from my lecturer.	
3.	I study better if I can interact and discuss with my peers.	
4.	Online learning allows me to be more flexible with my time and pace.	
5.	I prefer a learning program that allows learners to choose what to learn.	
6.	I do not like to learn online.	

**B. If I decide to join an ESL online writing course, it is because:**

	Reason	Tick (/) where applicable
1.	I just want to try out something new.	
2.	I am interested in an online/autonomous writing course.	
3.	I want to become a better writer.	
4.	I want to become a better learner.	
5.	I believe in lifelong learning.	
6.	Other:	

**C. Your knowledge of computer applications and readiness**

**Rate your knowledge of these computer applications:**

1. **don't know** at all / never heard of it
2. **little knowledge** of it but have heard of it
3. use the application with **some limited knowledge** of it
4. use the application and have **some reliable knowledge** of it
5. **very proficient** in it—could even teach the subject

Type of Program (Program Name)	1	2	3	4	5
Word processing (MS Word)					
Spreadsheet (MS Excel)					
Database (MS Access)					
Statistical package (SPSS)					
Search engine					
Entertainment applications (CD, mp3)					
Communication (e-mail, blog, and e-forum)					
Utility program (CD burning, file transfer)					
Games					

**D. Your knowledge/views regarding writing in English and an ESL online writing program**

Rate each item on the scale to indicate your level of agreement.

1. How often do you write in English besides writing for your class assignments?

- 1. Always (almost every day)
- 2. Often (occasionally)
- 3. Seldom (once a while, rarely)
- 4. Never

2. Learning to write well in English can improve your academic performance.

- 1. Strongly disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Agree
- 4. Strongly agree

3. On average, how many times do you write in English during the week?

- 1. 0-2
- 2. 3-5
- 3. 6-9
- 4. more than 10

4. Please rank the following types of writing you prefer to learn more about, with 1 indicating your most-preferred type of writing and 5 your least-preferred type.

	<b>Writing Type</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Academic					
	Creative					
	Other (to-do lists, messages, etc.)					

5. Please rank the following areas within academic writing according to how much more you prefer to learn more about them, with 1 indicating your most-preferred area and 5 your least-preferred area.

	<b>Area</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
	Grammar					
	Vocabulary					
	Organization					
	Mechanics					
	Content					
	Critical thinking					

6. Students should learn to be more aware or think more critically in their writing process.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

7. Spending 2 to 4 hours a week doing writing in class is sufficient for you to be a good writer.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

8. I need to practice writing more outside class through online tools to improve.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

9. The BEL 311 course should be supplemented with an online writing course or program.

1. Strongly disagree
2. Disagree
3. Agree
4. Strongly agree

### PART 3

1.	Would you be interested in participating in an online writing program? Explain why or why not.
2.	What types of issues or topics do you think would be interesting to discuss and write about in an online writing course or program?
3.	Do you think students should learn to be more aware or think more critically in their writing process?  a) yes b) no  Give reason(s) for your answer.
4.	What online tools, skills, instructional activities, materials, etc. do you think would be interesting and useful to be included in a supplementary online writing program for BEL 311 students? (Please specify.)  a) Online tools: Reason(s) for your answer:  b) Skills: Reason(s) for your answer:  c) Instructions/activities: Reason(s) for your answer:  d) Online materials/links: Reason(s) for your answer:  e) Other: Reason(s) for your answer:



## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Questions for Writing Instructors/Lecturers (from the Needs-Analysis Questionnaire)**

1. How long have you been teaching English-proficiency and BEL 311 classes?
2. What do you think of the attitudes of most our students towards writing in English?
3. On average, how many times do our students get to practice writing (i.e. essays) in class during the week? Is this sufficient?
4. What strategies or learning styles are used by our students when learning to write?
5. Why do you think that, to improve, students should practice writing outside the class more often?
6. In what areas of writing or learning to write do you feel our students are weak and should be helped to improve?
7. In what way is critical-thinking skill important for students in improving their writing?
8. What is the perception of our students towards critical writing?
9. How would we help our students to think and write critically?
10. How do our students perform in examinations, especially writing examinations?
11. Regarding enhancing their writing proficiency, what do our students feel about learning autonomously or through an online learning program compared with a structured, traditional module?
12. How would our students benefit from an online writing course? To what extent do online writing courses help students to enhance their writing interest and output?
13. What drives our students to participate in or drop out from the online writing program? Do they prepare themselves before embarking on the program?
14. What are the challenges our students would face in learning online?
15. What should be done if some of our students do not have the necessary computer or Internet skills to learn writing online?
16. In your opinion, would our students prefer to be given a chance to choose their own writing materials, activities, and topics? If so how would it benefit them?
17. Do our students rely solely on the materials provided or would they like to add or suggest other materials to be included for their writing class or module? If so, to what extent will this satisfy them and will it then contribute to their success as student writers?
18. What types of issues or topics do you think would be interesting to discuss and write about in a writing course?

19. What skills, activities, and materials do you think would be interesting and useful in an online writing course?
20. In what way do you think online writing activities such as writing in blogs, forums, and chat rooms and e-mailing are interesting and beneficial for students?
21. In your opinion, what makes a good online writing course for ESL students?
22. What approaches and techniques do you use when teaching writing? To what extent do they help in improving the writing performance of your students?
23. What procedures or steps do students execute before they submit their final copy?
24. What constraints do you face in teaching writing? How do they affect the writing performance of your students?
25. Given a chance, how would you improve your teaching performance?
26. What do you advise or recommend our students should do to improve their writing or to become better writers?