

Introduction

The English Language School's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program is for international undergraduate students who need to meet the English language proficiency requirements of main campus.

Students learn academic language and skills as well as cultural features of Canadian academia, including **academic integrity**.

This topic is pertinent to international students, whose lack of experience with Canadian academic standards can leave them prone to unintentional plagiarism.



Source: <https://www.ualberta.ca/information-services-and-technology/teaching-toolkit/group-work.html>

Background

International university students are often over-represented in cases of academic dishonesty (Moukhaiber, 2019).

These students often lack a clear understanding of broader academic expectations and specific assignment expectations in Canadian learning contexts (Pecorari, 2015). Often, they do not have sufficient tools, methods, or language to engage with and paraphrase texts in their own writing (*ibid.*)

Academic citation resources typically focus on why to cite (ethical reasoning) and how to cite (e.g., APA style). Few resources explain *when* to cite (e.g., when citations are necessary to uphold the validity of a text).

Academic citation resources may presume a shared cultural understanding of the concepts of learning and ownership of ideas. These might not be relevant to the previous learning contexts of international students.

Design

A set of learning materials were designed to be used as either a two-day intensive workshop, or as incremental lessons. In these materials, students:

- Analyse the purpose of citations
- Compare features of academic writing with and without citations
- Analyse academic expectations by reviewing sample instructor feedback on student writing
- Incorporate citations into a text using a student writing sample and reference text

With these materials, students explore why a text written with common knowledge alone lacks the depth and detail that a researched document would demonstrate.

Sample instructor feedback illustrates how reader skepticism can result from unsupported claims, and in turn, model Canadian academic expectations.

The task of reading, understanding, and choosing how to employ instructor feedback is authentic to students' academic experiences (Ellis, 2003), regardless of cultural context.

Compare the following texts. What differences do you notice?

1.

Flu symptoms appear shortly after someone comes in contact with the virus.

Flu symptoms typically appear between one and four days after someone comes in contact with the virus (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2019).

Task 2:

Read the teacher's comments on the text.

What facts does the author need to find or verify to support his/her writing?

The Flu in Canada

In Canada, the flu is a common illness that spreads in the fall and winter.

How does it spread?

It can spread between people, even by accident. Most healthy people can recover from the flu, but for some people who are weaker, it can be very dangerous. Every year, many Canadians have to go to the hospital from the flu, and some even die from the illness. If people start to feel symptoms, such as a fever or sore throat, it means they have the flu.

Careful - these could be symptoms of many illnesses

Which people, specifically? "Weaker" is too vague

How many?

Doctors recommend that everyone gets the flu shot every autumn to help prevent the spread of the virus.

This is not true - some people shouldn't get the shot

Images 1 & 2: Excerpted exercises from 'How to Choose Citations' (2018)

Evaluation

A cohort of 16 EAP 140 students were given a two-day in-class workshop of these materials in Week 4 of the course.

Two samples of their academic writing were analysed – one sample from Week 3 of the course (before the workshop) and one from Week 6 (after the workshop).

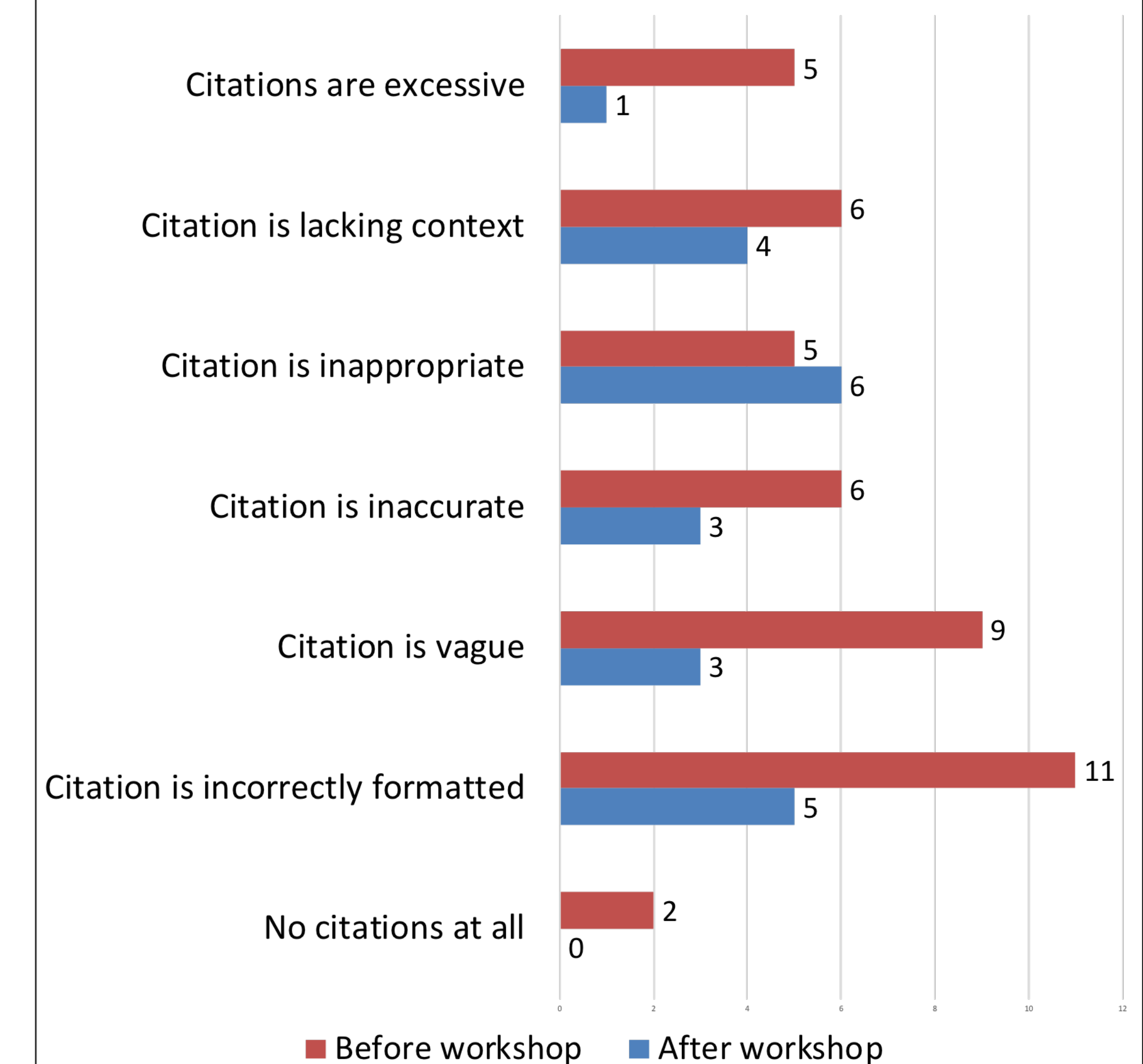
The Week 3 samples were analysed to assess how citations were being implemented incorrectly. Seven commonalities emerged:

- Citations are *excessive* (lack of original ideas/writing)
- Citation lacks *context* (no introduction and/or analysis)
- Citation is *inappropriate* (does not support argument)
- Citation is *inaccurate* (suggests comprehension error)
- Citation is *vague* (presents common knowledge)
- Citation is *incorrectly formatted*
- Student did not use citations

Results

The Week 6 samples were analysed for recurrences of the same patterns in citation usage observed in Week 3.

Citation issues in EAP 140 student writing samples



Week 6 samples showed a noteworthy reduction of citation issues. Significantly, there were fewer incidents of incorrect formatting, citations lacking context, citations lacking accuracy, and vague citations (presenting common knowledge).

Overall, while 42 citation issues were identified in the Week 3 writing samples, only 22 were identified in the Week 6 samples, marking a 52% reduction.

Conclusions

While this data draws from a smaller pool of writing samples, results suggest that these materials do help strengthen students' writing and help them apply citation practices with more accuracy.

These tasks could be useful for students to support the planning stages of a written academic assignment, or as the guiding materials of an academic writing workshop.