# Stakeholder Needs and Expected Learning Outcomes:
# An Analysis of a Bachelor of Arts in English Program

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**ABSTRACT**

**Background and Objectives:** Maejo University offers a Bachelor of Arts in English, and the program is subject to a five-year revision cycle. As part of the curriculum development process, we recognize the significance that developing an effective curriculum has for stakeholders. A well-conducted needs analysis, including different stakeholder groups, is believed to lead to well-articulated Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs). Therefore, this study incorporates stakeholders, as identified by ASEAN University Network – Quality Assurance (AUN-QA), to investigate their English language learning needs and to develop the ELOs of the program and its respective English courses.

**Methodology:** The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing focus group discussions with 76 participants who were selected through purposive sampling. Participants comprised first-year students of the program, alumni, employers, university teachers, and university administrators. The analysis involved coding the data based on themes derived from the focus group discussions. To ensure trustworthiness, these themes were identified, refined, and then coded through a careful examination of the participants' responses by two researchers. HyperRESEARCH 4.5.4 was used to both unveil the English learning needs for a Bachelor of Arts in English and calculate their frequency.

**Main Results:** The findings led to a redesign of ELOs. The curriculum was redesigned to equip the students with more listening and speaking courses. The redesign included the addition of linguistics and literature courses, which are viewed as a foundation for developing language skills. Technology in translation courses was incorporated into the new curriculum. Literature courses were revised to help the students better understand Western cultures. Additional languages such as Japanese and Mandarin, for students who wish to work in the service industry, remain part of the curriculum. Soft skills such as service mindedness, confidence, and promoting lifelong learning have also been incorporated as ELOs for the program.

**Discussions:** The study highlights the refinement of ELOs for the BA in English program. Both hard and soft skills that are required for success in the program were based on stakeholder's professed insight and needs for higher education level English learning. The findings suggest that common ground exists among stakeholder groups regarding their perceptions of the importance of oral English communication in the workplace and the value of additional languages

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for service industry careers. The study also discusses the integration of soft skills, such as leadership, teamwork, and lifelong learning, as they are necessary for working life and help articulate the vision of the university.

**Conclusions:** The study provides empirical evidence from a stakeholder-driven needs analysis to inform the curriculum development of a BA in English program. The study emphasizes that curriculum design is an ongoing process that responds to the changing needs of teaching and learning in higher education. It is evident that the stakeholders in this study prioritized English speaking and listening skills as well as communicative competencies. Additionally, literature and linguistics courses were acknowledged as a foundation for language development. Soft skills such as lifelong learning, teamwork, and service-mindedness were also found to be essential for both work and study.

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## Introduction

English is taught as a foreign language (EFL) in Thailand and constitutes a compulsory subject across all education levels. This is in line with Jenkins (2007), who noted the crucial role of English in academic and professional contexts. This explains why many higher education institutions offer a Bachelor of Arts in English. The goal is to help prepare students through more intensive and specific English courses to support their future careers in translation, English language teaching, and service industry work, which includes hotels and airlines. Many students aiming for the degree expect the program to help them communicate orally and more effectively in English. They expect courses that provide more intensive training in English communication skills and knowledge than what was afforded to them in high school. Therefore, there is a growing concern regarding the effectiveness of English degree programs and their ability to meet the needs of the students and the demands of competent English use in academic and professional settings. Although there have been many attempts through educational reforms in Thailand, some students who obtained degrees in English have reported difficulties in communicating effectively in English. This issue has exposed gaps and limitations in curriculum design in higher education in Thailand.

However, focusing solely on current students in the program may not be sufficient for curriculum development. Longpradit et al. (2019) acknowledged that the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach, which focuses on expected learning outcomes and what students should be capable of doing upon completing a program, requires various stakeholder groups, such as alumni, employers, and faculty members. These groups represent the university's mission and vision and need to be involved in formatting learning outcomes. Although the program lecturers are not identified as stakeholders, they play a role in designing and implementing the learning outcomes and are therefore incorporated into the stakeholder groups in the current study. This comprehensive approach of engaging stakeholder groups in curriculum design and development can fill knowledge gaps in the literature, which often relies on a limited group of stakeholders for data collection. The inclusion of multiple groups of stakeholders is hoped to ensure the development of more effective learning outcomes that match the real-world needs of students and enhance their future employability.

In the current study, we investigate the English language proficiency needs of current students, alumni, program lecturers, university administrators, and employers to formulate the ELOs that can prepare the program for OBE. By involving these stakeholder groups in the redesign of the ELOs, we hope to gain fruitful information regarding the English language proficiency needs of English majors who are pursuing a Bachelor of Arts. For example, current students in the program can provide insights into what they find interesting and challenging, which can influence their career path. Alumni can offer valuable feedback on how well the curriculum works and its relevance to their current jobs. The program lecturers can provide information about their teaching methods, the specific courses they teach, and overall program experience. University administrators can provide information about the institution's mission and vision in regard to the program. Employers can offer valuable perspectives on the skills, knowledge, and level of English proficiency required in the workplace.

**The context of the study**

Maejo University—a higher education institution in Thailand—offers a Bachelor of Arts in English, and the program must be revised every five years. The university operates under the Thai Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (TQF-Hed), which outlines the learning domains and the quality of the higher education systems of the country. It is composed of levels of qualifications, subject areas, and ELOs that ensure the effective implementation of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education Institutions in producing graduates who attain the ELOs.

The current Bachelor of Arts in English curriculum at Maejo University, guided by TQF1, was revised in 2020. TQF1 marks standards and specifies the ELOs of graduates at each level of education in a particular field of study. It outlines the characteristics of graduates in the degree and the essential body of knowledge that must be included in the curriculum to ensure that graduates from different higher education institutions in the same field can achieve similar learning outcomes. At the same time, TQF1 allows flexibility for institutions to add content beyond what is outlined to enable them to develop diverse curricula while still maintaining comparable standards for the ELOs in the same area and field of study and qualification levels. TQF1 for a Bachelor of Arts in English offered in Thailand emphasizes that the graduates must have a sound knowledge of English literature, English linguistics, translation from Thai to English, and English to Thai. Also, the students must be proficient in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and other English for specific purposes. For students of the Bachelor of Arts in English program, the expected learning outcome under TQF1 is proficiency at the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Although TQF1 provides a standard framework, it is also necessary to incorporate a needs analysis to ensure that the curriculum is responsive and meets the needs of multiple stakeholder groups, including all current students, alumni, program lecturers, university administrators, and employers. Such a needs analysis, viewed through the lens of various stakeholder groups, can lead to the formulation of well-informed learning outcomes. Moreover, this ensures that students in the program can fully learn what they need for careers in industries where the effective use of English is a requirement. To fill the gaps of knowledge in curriculum design and development, the needs of various stakeholder groups were consulted regarding the hard and soft English language skills upon which to base the program's learning outcomes, and to ensure the needs of those stakeholders are being met.

Thus, the following research questions are raised:
1. What are the stakeholders' needs for the Bachelor of Arts Program in English?
2. What should the ELOs be, and what are the relevant courses to be included in the Bachelor of Arts Program in English?

**Literature Review**

*Stakeholder involvement in curriculum design and development*

According to Richards (2001), the curriculum design and development process for program evaluation is complex. Stakeholders in the curriculum implementation include current students, alumni, and program lecturers, who are directly impacted by the curriculum. Other groups of stakeholders, such as employers and university administrators, also have an indirect impact. Therefore, their different interests, needs, and requirements must be recognized. Implementing curriculum design is therefore an ongoing process, and program revisions are needed to ensure the program meets and addresses the needs of multiple stakeholder groups.

A needs analysis serves as a starting point in curriculum design and can help provide useful information to inform the development of English teaching programs to assist students' needs and future employability (Nation & Macalister, 2010). Building upon this foundation, Oliver et al. (2012) emphasized that a curriculum should be supported by comprehensive data so that the students are sufficiently prepared for dynamic communicative and authentic interactions. Li (2014) extended that curriculum design and development is a process during which the basic research principle of a teaching plan is conveyed, supervised, and put into practice.

To meet and address the needs of various stakeholder groups, this study employed the curriculum development model outlined by Brown (2016), who emphasizes that needs analysis is important because it can bridge the gaps between what students believe they must learn and what teachers, employers, and university administrators perceive as their needs. The model also offers a comprehensive and flexible research tool for education professionals to design and develop the program.

*Needs analysis in ELT curriculum design and development*

Brown (1995) characterizes needs analysis as a learner-centered approach, which determines the language structures and content that the students are likely to require. In curriculum design and development, needs analysis serves as a systematic tool for program construction by means of incorporating input from stakeholders in the program. Hence, the language needs can be identified, and the foundation of the program can be established.

According to Richards (2001), needs analyses can have various users such as curriculum officers, teachers, students, textbook writers, testing personnel, and tertiary institutions. Each may use their analysis differently. In essence, needs analyses have many potential purposes and users. They systematically gather data to inform curriculum design and ensure it meets stakeholder needs.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) categorized needs into two types: target needs, which are referred to as what students must be able to achieve, and *learning needs*, which are requirements students have during the learning process. Since the goal is to develop an effective curriculum, the needs analysis is centered around learning goals, including language, content, and skills. The analysis process involves discovering needs through necessities, lacks, and wants. *Lacks analysis* examines the learner's current knowledge level (e.g., evaluating their writing assignments for areas needing improvement), while *wants analysis* gathers learner opinions on what they feel is useful, helping align the curriculum with learner views.

In conclusion, it becomes evident that effective curriculum design and development for well-articulated ELOs requires multiple stakeholder groups. While Brown (1995) and Hutchinson and Waters (1987) focus on what the students need to learn, Richards (2001) expands to include teachers, administrators, and others, so that each group can offer insights into program development. By incorporating these stakeholder groups, systematic inputs from

all stakeholder groups can contribute to the ELOs, meeting the real needs of stakeholders in the program.

### The role of stakeholders in need analysis for curriculum development and research

While Richards and Schmidt (2010) define needs analysis as identifying and prioritizing learners' needs and language learners' requirements, Brown (1995) offers a more comprehensive definition that needs analysis is how relevant, subjective, and objective information is systematically collected and analyzed to establish curriculum objectives and outcomes of the students in the program to address the students' language learning needs in their instructional context. Brown (2016) expands this by highlighting stakeholder involvement, such as students, teachers, parents, and administrators. This process requires quantitative and qualitative data from relevant stakeholder groups for analysis.

Based on Brown (2016), the needs analysis results can be used in the curriculum design and development, as the information gained from stakeholders helps to define the learning outcomes of the learners and the curriculum. He explained that the learning outcomes have different types and can be arranged on a continuum from very precisely defined to embedded and experimental.

The involvement of various stakeholders in curriculum design and development was supported by Li (2014), who concluded that curriculum design and development should have a survey of the needs of learners, educational institutions, and society. The paper emphasized that needs analysis became an effective tool for designing a better curriculum that helps prepare the students for future professional roles.

For the current study, the needs analysis of various groups of stakeholders for curriculum design and development is focused on because learning outcomes based on needs analysis can provide a sound basis for curriculum development to meet the needs in actual teaching and learning circumstances. Through a comprehensive literature review, this study aims to investigate the needs of the current students (first-year students), the program lecturers, alumni, employers, and the university administrators for the Bachelor of Arts Program in English, to formulate the ELOs and relevant courses included in the Bachelor of Arts Program in English at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Maejo University.

### Review of related studies

We investigated studies regarding the roles of needs analysis in curriculum design and development, specifically in English Language Teaching (ELT). We also examined the findings and impacts on stakeholders involved in curriculum design and development.

Poedjiastutie and Oliver (2017) studied the needs of stakeholders, which consisted of employers, teachers, and students of the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) program. The study revealed that the most important abilities necessary for obtaining a good job were engaging in international collaboration and continuing in higher education.

Ergünay and Uysal (2020) collected data using the needs analysis framework proposed by Brown (2016), which led to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum development. The students and the teachers were the participants, and the results of the questionnaire revealed students' attitudes towards class materials, tasks, evaluations, and teachers' performances.

Kaya (2021) explored students' needs regarding English within the cabin service industry, to inform the development of a vocational English program. The researcher stated that the students require a learner-centered curriculum based on their specific needs. In this approach, the study emphasized that students should be actively involved throughout the teaching and learning process. The teachers' role is to facilitate and provide students with ample practice opportunities by encouraging them to speak English as much as possible, and

the lessons should prepare them for real-life communication that they can adapt for future careers.

Johnson et al. (2021) conducted an empirical study on stakeholder engagement in implementing a Master of Arts in Literature through an e-learning approach. The research highlights the roles of various stakeholders and their contributions to curriculum innovation. Thus, recognizing, analyzing, and effectively managing stakeholder participation is crucial for successful curriculum development.

Aysu and Özcan (2021) investigated the English language needs of tourism students for their future employment. Data was collected through surveys and interviews involving students, alumni, experts, and employers in the tourism sector. The results indicated that although reading, writing, listening, and speaking were all important, oral communication skills were prioritized.

Do (2023) investigated 60 Vietnamese EFL students regarding their English writing needs, perceived difficulties, and preferences through surveys, writing, and interviews. The study was centered around the mismatches between what the students needed (more feedback, collaborative activities, and writing practice) and what the teachers were providing (limited individual feedback due to large class sizes and heavy workloads). It was proposed that a task-based writing course design should be implemented, including idea development and peer feedback training activities.

Karnchanachari (2024) examined the English language learning requirements of Thai Metropolitan police officers for their professional duties, along with the problems they faced when using English on the job. Data was gathered through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that participants wanted to improve both general and job-specific English communication skills, preferring in-person learning with teachers (native and non-native speakers) and colleagues.

To sum up, the research studies reviewed and highlighted the vital role of needs analysis in curriculum design and development. The findings emphasized the importance of engaging various stakeholders, including learners, educational institutions, employers, teachers, and curriculum developers. Employing data collection methods such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and observations offers insights into the language learning needs from stakeholders' points of view to develop a more effective curriculum in ELT.

## Methodology
### Participants

Participants were purposively selected from a small group to gather information about their views and opinions regarding English learning needs. Participants were interviewed in a group setting, enabling a fuller assessment of the group's perspective, their specific experiences, and the reasons for their attitudes and behaviors. A total of 76 participants were purposively selected and categorized into 5 stakeholder groups to gather diverse and valuable insights for the study.

The first group consisted of 17 employers from various industries (6 hotel staff, 5 airline officers, 4 schoolteachers, and 2 translators) where graduates have been employed. Besides, these students had chosen to do their cooperative education in these industries during their final semester of undergraduate studies. Therefore, this group was included to provide an essential industry perspective on workplace expectations and the practical skills that graduates are expected to perform.

The second group consisted of 23 first-year English majors at Maejo University. They are crucial stakeholders in curriculum development because they are the primary customers of education. Their participation was essential in making first-hand, direct feedback regarding the efficacy of the current curriculum and its application.

The third group included 9 alumni, working in fields such as education, the airline industry, hospitality, and translation. Alumni can recognize current industry trends and the abilities required of graduates since they have firsthand experience in the job market. They provided a reflective view on how the program prepared them for their careers, highlighting the long-term value and relevance of the program.

The fourth group consisted of 22 English teachers from Maejo University and other higher education institutions in the upper northern region of Thailand. Teachers can help develop curricula that are practical and effective, rather than using theoretical exercises that are ineffective in classroom settings. As the individuals who implement the curriculum, their pedagogical expertise was crucial for understanding the realities of course planning and instruction.

The last group consisted of 5 university administrators. Administrators can facilitate the work of curriculum committees, provide guidance, and ensure that faculty have the support and resources they need for curriculum development. They gave feedback regarding the university's overall policies and philosophy to make sure that any modification in the programs is aligned with the institution's strategic vision and mission.

**Table 1**. A summary of the participants of the study

|  | Demographic Variable | N of the participants | % of the participants |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Gender** | Male | 31 | 40.8 |
|  | Female | 45 | 59.2 |
|  | Total | 76 | 100 |
| **Age** | 19 -26 | 26 | 34.2 |
|  | 27 – 33 | 19 | 25.0 |
|  | 34 – 41 | 15 | 19.7 |
|  | 42 – 48 | 10 | 13.1 |
|  | 49 – 55 | 4 | 5.3 |
|  | Above 55 | 2 | 2.6 |
| **Category** | Employers |  |  |
|  | Hotel Staff | 6 | 7.9 |
|  | Airline Officers | 5 | 6.6 |
|  | School teachers | 4 | 5.3 |
|  | Translators | 2 | 2.6 |
|  | Current students (1st year) | 23 | 30.2 |
|  | Alumni | 9 | 11.8 |
|  | Program lecturers | 22 | 28.9 |
|  | Administrators | 5 | 6.6 |

### Data collection and instruments

A focus group discussion was used for the current study as a qualitative research tool to gather views and opinions about English language learning needs, such as the skills needed for study and work, the course contents matching future careers, and how the program should be redesigned in alignment with the university's mission and vision. According to Mishra (2016), focus groups are a type of in-depth interview conducted in a group, which effectively captures varied perspectives because the participants can reveal insights and build upon each other's ideas through dynamic group participation that might not emerge from individual interviews. This is in line with Knowles (2015), who noted that focus groups are commonly employed in curriculum design and development due to their efficiency and ability to generate more detailed and nuanced feedback. Compared to surveys, they are more interactive and enable participants to expand and clarify their ideas. In a related study, Devies et al. (2022) used a focus group approach to develop an online course and found that incorporating multiple voices from different groups of people and backgrounds revealed a more inclusive and relevant curriculum than a curriculum that would have been developed or created by

individual developers alone. Drawing upon these methodological strengths, using a focus group for the current study facilitated diverse stakeholders' perspectives and formative feedback for a more inclusive and relevant curriculum.

Regarding the standardized set of questions for the focus group discussions, the study sought expert review for content appropriateness. Three experts were selected. The first was an expert in the field of Thai language use for communication, as the focus group discussions were conducted in Thai. Additionally, 2 Thai experts in ELT examined the content validity of the questions. The experts were asked to examine the interview question guidelines by analyzing the Index of Items Objective Congruence (IOC) and provide suggestions for any unclear questions. The results from the IOC assessment showed the IOC values for all items ranged from 0.67 – 1.00, with items having IOC values greater than 0.5 considered acceptable. After the expert review, the modified questions were trialed on 8 participants who had similar characteristics to those in the study group. The full list of interview questions, translated into English, can be found in Appendix A.

This study was approved by the Human Research Committee, Payap University, Approval Number: PYU_REC No. 65/033. Before data collection, the participants reviewed the informed consent letter, a voluntary agreement outlining their role in the research study. The consent process ensured that the participants received complete information about the study's procedures, duration, possible risks, and benefits. We also asked permission from the participants to audio-record the discussion and take notes during the focus group discussion for further content analysis. To ensure data security and confidentiality, the transcribed and coded data were stored in the HyperRESEARCH 4.5.4 software, which only two researchers involved in this study could access via a password-protected account. Following research completion, all data, consent forms, and other identifiable documents would be kept confidential for a period of one year, after which they would be destroyed and deleted from the system irrecoverably.

### *Data analysis*

The data from the focus group discussions were transcribed and analyzed by using the software HyperRESEARCH version 4.5.4 to analyze the qualitative data. The coded data from the software were used to determine frequencies of the themes and topics of English language learning needs from the following stakeholder groups: current students (first-year students), program lecturers, alumni, employers, and university administrators. To enhance the trustworthiness of the coding process, we independently identified, refined, and coded the data. We then engaged in review sessions to collaboratively discuss emerging themes and topics, refine the categories, and resolve discrepancies. Any disagreements were discussed until a mutual agreement was reached to improve consistency and ensure the interpretation and application of the themes and topics derived from the focus group discussions, as shown in Table 2. Coded information categorized by themes and topics. The data coded was used to gain insights into their aspirations and needs for language skills, as well as soft skills necessary to help design the courses relevant to their needs.

**Table 2**. Coded information categorized by themes and topics.

| Themes and Topics | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **English skills for study** | **English Skills for work** | **IT skills** | **Characteristics** | **Courses** | **Job/ Industry** | **University Mission and Vision** | **Translation** | **Linguistics** | **Literature** | **Additional language** |
| Speaking | Speaking | Ms. word | Service mind | Speaking | Translator | Agriculture | Creative works | Phonetics | Drama | Mandarin |
| Listening | Listening | Ms. Excel | Confidence | Listening | English teacher | Innovation | Legal documents | Phonology | Fiction | Korean |
| Conversation | Conversation | Ms. Power Point Presentation | Leadership | Conversation | English Tutor | Smart Farming | Movies | Semantics | Poetry | Chinese |
| Reading | Reading | Canva | Teamwork | Reading | Flight attendant | Lifelong learning | Novels/ Fiction | Morphology | New media | French |
| Writing | Writing | Photoshop | Lifelong learning | Writing | Airport ground service | | | Syntax | Mythology | German |
| Grammar | Grammar | | Critical thinking | Grammar | Secretary | | | Discourse | | |
| | | | Problem solving | | Hotel receptionist | | | World Englishes | | |

## Findings and Discussions

This section presents the key findings from the focus group discussion regarding the perspectives of stakeholder groups on English skills and requirements. It also discusses stakeholders' recommendations for additional languages, courses, and technical skills, essential for the program.

### *Stakeholders' perspectives on essential English skills and needs*

The coded data revealed the stakeholders' needs for English proficiency and soft skills of the university students aiming for a Bachelor of Arts in English. All stakeholders agreed that oral communication in English is vital, with listening and speaking skills frequently mentioned as necessary.

Although some groups of alumni and employers are opposed to learning English literature as it does not contribute much to successful English communication, some English program lecturers and some employers agree that learning English literature can develop critical thinking skills.

Moreover, because many current students want to work in the service industry, which includes hotels and the airlines, many agreed that learning Mandarin as a third language can increase their job opportunities. This is also supported by the alumni and employers in the service sector, who say that communicating in Mandarin was seen as an advantage in the service industry. The alumni and employers also frequently mentioned the ability to use Microsoft Excel. For the soft skills, the alumni and employers emphasized the need for program lecturers to prepare students for real-world communication and build confidence in using English.

**Table 3**. Frequency of responses (Word Counts): A summary of needs categorized by the stakeholders' groups

| | | Current Students (1st year) | Alumni | Program Lecturers | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **English Skills for Study** | Listening-Speaking/Conversation | 41 | 36 | 21 | 15 |
| | Reading | 24 | 17 | 13 | 6 |
| | Grammar/Writing | 21 | 19 | 17 | 4 |
| | Translation | 19 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| **English Skills for Work** | Listening-Speaking/Conversation | 40 | 22 | 11 | 14 |
| | Grammar/Writing | 15 | 9 | 15 | 7 |
| | Reading | 4 | 6 | 8 | 6 |
| | Translation | 4 | 5 | 3 | 4 |
| **Third Language Skills** | Mandarin Chinese | 16 | 21 | 11 | 16 |
| | Korean | 11 | 4 | 4 | 3 |
| | French | 9 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| | German | 5 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | Japanese | 3 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| **Information Technology Skills** | MS Excel | 33 | 49 | 30 | 19 |
| | MS Word | 7 | 23 | 16 | 13 |
| | Adobe/Photoshop | 3 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| | MS PowerPoint/Canva | 2 | 6 | 18 | 17 |
| **Soft Skills** | Communication | 9 | 6 | 3 | 4 |
| | Confidence | 8 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| | Problem-solving | 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| | Service-mind | 5 | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| | Critical Thinking | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 |
| **Future Career/ Industries** | Hotel/Airline Business | 28 | 14 | 25 | 6 |
| | Translator | 14 | 2 | 9 | 3 |
| | Teacher/Tutor | 9 | 6 | 16 | 4 |
| | Tour Guide | 5 | 0 | 4 | 5 |
| **How Linguistics and Literature are viewed** | Linguistics is necessary for successful communication, meaning, structures, and pronunciation. | | 16 | 17 | 6 |
| | Literature is not important. | | 13 | 0 | 9 |
| | Linguistics is important for those who want to work as teachers and tutors. | | 11 | 21 | 5 |
| | Literature serves as a foundation for understanding cultures. | | 11 | 19 | 3 |
| | Linguistics is not important. | | | 0 | 4 |
| | Literature can be taught on a basis. | | 7 | 16 | 2 |
| | Literature is necessary for developing critical thinking skills. | | 2 | 15 | 3 |
| | Linguistics is necessary for higher education. | | 4 | 17 | 3 |
| | Literature provides a basis for learning English. | | 1 | 19 | 2 |

*Note: The current students' views regarding literature and linguistics were not included because they are first-year students and therefore have not taken these courses.*

The findings reveal that the current first-year students consistently show the highest needs across most practical skills, while program lecturers emphasize academic content areas such as literature and linguistics. Notably, the university administrators, including the dean, deputy dean, and vice president, focus primarily on the needs that can be aligned with the university's mission and vision. These various perspectives among stakeholder groups

emphasize the balance of needs in curriculum development that addresses both student concerns and job requirements as identified by employers and alumni, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**. A percentage summary of needs organized by topics, categorized by stakeholders' groups

| | Current Students (1st year) | Alumni | Employers | Program Lecturers | Administrators |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **English Skills for Study** | 40.23 | 28.35 | 10.73 | 20.69 | 0.00 |
| **English Skills for Work** | 37.81 | 25.77 | 15.29 | 21.13 | 0.00 |
| **Third Language Skills** | 35.20 | 27.20 | 21.60 | 16.00 | 0.00 |
| **Information Technology Skills** | 18.22 | 32.79 | 22.67 | 26.32 | 0.00 |
| **Soft Skills** | 40.00 | 27.14 | 17.14 | 15.71 | 0.00 |
| **Future Career/ Industries** | 37.33 | 14.67 | 12.00 | 36.00 | 0.00 |
| **Linguistics and Literature subjects** | | 15.22 | 32.61 | 52.17 | 0.00 |
| **The university's vision and missions** | | | | | 100 |

### *English language learning needs for a Bachelor of Arts in English (Categorized by stakeholder groups)*
### *Current Students*

In a focus group discussion with the current first-year students, they reported that the English language skills essential for their future careers include communicative skills, such as listening, speaking, and the ability to engage in conversations, as well as presentation skills. The program should offer more listening and speaking courses to prepare them for their future careers. The topics of the communicative courses should be more engaging. Regarding the third language, which is found essential for service industry jobs, the current students considered Mandarin Chinese to be crucial, and this was listed as the top priority. They would also like the teachers to equip them with some basic skills in Microsoft Excel. They discussed these in the group discussion as follows:

> "I would like to improve my speaking, reading, and writing skills. I would like to attend training sessions on Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and Canva. Also, I would like to learn Mandarin."

> "I would like to improve my English-speaking skills by studying with native speakers, and I am also interested in attending training sessions on Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word."

### *Alumni*

The alumni stated that the English proficiencies essential for their future vocational pursuits are listening and speaking skills. Additionally, translation competencies were perceived as necessary for working with translation service providers. They underscored the importance of collaborative learning environments for leadership development as a crucial means of cultivating social and interpersonal competencies. They also prioritized the acquisition of problem-solving skills and communication abilities. The integration of computer literacy into the curriculum was also recommended. The alumni proposed the

training in Microsoft Excel for both academic and professional contexts. As for the third language, the alumni suggested prioritizing Mandarin as it is considered globally significant in the competitive job market. Concerning the domains of English linguistics and literature, the alumni find English linguistics courses relevant for their real-life applications because they recognize the practical value of these courses in facilitating authentic communication and interpretation. English literature courses are also valuable in fostering an understanding of Western cultures and their perspectives and promoting critical thinking. However, some alumni question the relevance of these literary courses because they perceive a lack of direct application in professional settings in the service industry. The alumni stated the following:

> "I think being able to speak English is very important. The courses should mainly focus on speaking. Integrating the use of Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word would be great. In the case of a foreign language, either Mandarin or Japanese is useful because these languages can provide more opportunities for applying for jobs with high salaries. Literature courses can be an elective course. However, linguistics courses are important to me personally since I gain a lot of knowledge from them that I apply to my job as a teacher."

### Employers

Although the employers involved in the study have different professional backgrounds, they identified English communication skills—such as listening, speaking, conversation, and presentation—as the most important for preparing students for future employment. They also suggested some ESP courses for the students, such as English for teachers, English for the Airline Industry, and English for Hotel Staff. They also emphasized collaborative skills for social development, highlighting the importance of having a service mindset and developing strong interpersonal relationships. Regarding the promotion of computer skills for academic and future careers, the employers recommended that the students be proficient in Microsoft Excel, as well as PowerPoint and Canva for presentation purposes.

The employers mentioned Mandarin as one of the most important additional languages for service industries such as the airline business and hospitality. They expressed concerns about the inclusion of English linguistics and literature courses in the curriculum. They agreed that these subjects should be included, particularly English linguistics, due to its emphasis on meaningful communication, interpretation, pronunciation, and future English language teaching. For English literature subjects, the employers agreed that they should still be incorporated into the curriculum, as these subjects are essential for understanding people and culture and enhancing critical thinking skills. Only a small group of employers mentioned that English linguistics and literature courses are of little or no importance for English communication. They offered the following comments:

> "I work in the airline industry. The essential skills that the English program should provide the students are speaking, listening, public speaking, presentation, customer service relationships, Microsoft Office, and Mandarin Chinese courses. Having service-mindedness is vital in this industry. I believe that studying linguistics is more beneficial than literature, especially phonetics, which is considered crucial in effective communication with customers."

> "I am working as an English teacher. The English program should provide students with essential skills, such as speaking, reading, writing, and phonics. Students should also have a service-mindedness. They should be able to communicate in a third language, such as Mandarin or Japanese. Studying linguistics and literature is also vital because students can apply their knowledge in their future careers, especially as teachers."

### Program lecturers

The program lecturers in the Bachelor of Arts in English at Maejo University and other upper northern universities in Thailand reported in the focus group discussions that the majority of the graduates from their programs are employed in service industries such as hotels and airlines, as well as in teaching-related professions. They revealed that the essential skills for the students are English communicative skills, particularly listening and speaking skills. Translation skills are also important for students seeking careers in companies involved in media or entertainment translation. They suggested developing lifelong learning skills and emphasizing collaborative learning to foster students' leadership and interpersonal skills.

Concerning computer skills for learning and future employment, the program lecturers suggested incorporating training in Microsoft Excel and Word during learning, followed by PowerPoint and Canva for presentation purposes. They also agreed that Mandarin Chinese is important for students as an additional language in the service industry.

However, some program lecturers suggested that these additional languages should be optional, allowing the students to engage in self-study through online resources. All the program lecturers in the focus group discussions agreed that English linguistics and literature should not be neglected, as they form the foundation for successful communication, interpretation, critical thinking, and clear pronunciation. However, these subjects should be taught at a basic level, emphasizing practical application rather than theoretical concepts. One lecturer offered the following comments:

> "After graduation, most students become hotel staff, government officers, teachers, and translators. Therefore, all four skills should be developed through activities related to English communicative skills. Another important point is that there should be training in Microsoft Excel and Word, as well as some basic knowledge of an additional language. I believe that teaching linguistics and literature is also necessary, as it enables students to gain a better understanding of various cultures and develop critical thinking skills."

### The university administrators

The university administrators, including the dean, deputy dean, and vice president at Maejo University, have provided strategic guidance on the teaching and learning activities for the Bachelor of Arts in English. This is done with the intent of aligning with the university's educational philosophy that strongly emphasizes fostering lifelong learning, promoting hands-on and experiential learning opportunities, and instilling a strong work ethic among university students. According to the university's vice president for Academic Affairs, lifelong learning is crucial for enhancing academic intelligence as it promotes the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. The Bachelor of Arts in English should be designed to develop skills and competencies, preparing students to identify their own learning needs and pursue self-directed learning opportunities, including metacognitive and soft skills. Maejo University believes in active learning; therefore, this is incorporated into its educational philosophy. The vice president urges the program to implement hands-on and experiential learning, such as group projects, reports, assignments, and role-plays, to foster active participation from students within the course content. The following are suggestions from academic administrators:

> "The program committees should consider the education philosophy when designing the teaching and learning approaches. At Maejo University, we emphasize learning by doing; therefore, the program committees should provide students with more practice in the language through active learning, group projects, or role-playing, rather than relying on lecture-based instruction."

> "Lifelong learning skills and an entrepreneurial mindset are important core values of the University. The program committee should integrate these into the curriculum, such as in lessons or extracurricular activities."

Kiely (2014) notes that English offers access to life opportunities in areas including employment, career advancement, tourism, technology, and education. English in Thailand has become a compulsory subject across all education levels from primary to higher education. Therefore, it is evident that the stakeholders, such as current students, teachers, alumni, and employers, prioritize English listening and speaking skills along with overall communicative competence for study and work.

The findings of the current study correspond to empirical research on stakeholder needs analysis for curriculum design and development. For example, Poedjiastutie and Oliver (2017) studied the needs of stakeholders, which consisted of employers, teachers, and students of the ESP program at an Indonesian university. The study revealed that communication in English is considered the most important ability to apply for a good job, participate in international collaboration, and continue higher education. Similarly, Aysu and Özcan (2021) examined the English language learning needs of tourism students for their future careers. The results showed that all four English language skills were significant for tourism students, but listening and speaking skills were the two most important English skills. Karnchanachari (2024) also found that the participants expressed a need to enhance their general and technical communicative English skills, relevant to their duties as metropolitan police officers.

### The proposed Expected Learning Outcomes (ELOs)

The needs of stakeholders were collected and analyzed to formulate the revised ELOs for the Bachelor of Arts in English at Maejo University. They were arranged in order from simple to complex behaviors as follows:

**(Hard skills)**
ELO-H1 Communicate fluently and appropriately in English for daily life.
ELO-H2 Communicate fluently and appropriately in English in academic and professional settings.
ELO-H3 Translate texts correctly and appropriately for communication in a professional context.
ELO-H4 Identify linguistics, literature, and translation concepts for communication.
ELO-H5 Analyze English language use in social contexts based on linguistic theories.
ELO-H6 Analyze literary works to understand individuals and society.
ELO-H7 Apply linguistic, literary, and translation theories for effective communication.
**(Soft skills)**
ELO-S1: Use information and technology to communicate in written and spoken English while cultivating a mindset conducive to lifelong learning.
ELO-S2: Exhibit a service-oriented disposition characterized by a willingness to assist others.
ELO-S3: Demonstrate leadership and confidence through a team working environment.

The formulated ELOs, both hard and soft skills, can be categorized according to the various stakeholder groups in Table 5.

**Table 5**. ELOs and groups of stakeholders' needs

| ELOs | | Stakeholders | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Current Students (1st year) | Alumni | Employers | Program Lecturers | Adminis-trators |
| **Hard Skills** | ELO-H1 Communicate fluently and appropriately in English for daily life. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H2 Communicate fluently and appropriately in English in academic and professional settings. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H3 Translate texts correctly and appropriately for communication in a professional context. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H4 Identify linguistics, literature, and translation concepts for communication. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H5 Analyze English language use in social contexts based on linguistic theories. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H6 Analyze literary works to understand humans and society. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | ELO-H7 Apply linguistic, literary, and translation theories for effective communication. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| **Soft Skills** | ELO-S1: Use information and technology to communicate in written and spoken English while cultivating a mindset conducive to lifelong learning. | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | ELO-S2: Exhibit a service-oriented disposition characterized by a willingness to assist others. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | ELO-S3: Demonstrate leadership and confidence through a team working environment. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

The new proposed ELOs of the program include hard and soft skills. The hard skills cover the skills relevant to achieving English language proficiency and fundamental English knowledge, which serve as a foundation in academic and professional settings. This includes equipping students with speaking and listening skills, as well as skills in English linguistics, literature, and the translation of different types of texts and genres. English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) courses are also incorporated as major electives for students who want to pursue careers in teaching, service industries, and translation.

Additionally, some soft skills essential for interpersonal communication and articulating the university's mission and vision, are also incorporated. We realized that nowadays, the job market is highly competitive, and job sustainability is challenging due to the changing educational trends, where the emphasis is not only on hard skills but also on soft skills. When designing a curriculum, we aim to equip English majors with soft skills so they can use the language effectively. Soft skills are non-technical abilities that describe how students work and interact with others. As opposed to hard skills, soft skills are often developed through learning experiences and classroom activities, helping students excel. As suggested by Wats, M. and Wats, R. K. (2009), to make soft skills development possible and relevant, the employers and alumni must be involved in defining the soft skills necessary for different industries, ensuring better acceptance in the job market. Implementing only hard skills at the

higher education level is not enough. Soft skills and hard skills, such as content knowledge, should both be integrated into the courses of the program.

Based on the findings, it is noted that the alumni mentioned teamwork skills, including the ability to work collaboratively with confidence and to demonstrate leadership. Many alumni work in the service industry sector, and current students state that they wish to work for hotels and airlines. Therefore, the alumni also mentioned in the focus group interview that preparing English majors to have a service mindset can be advantageous in their working life. Also, the alumni mentioned the importance of information technology skills, such as Microsoft Excel, Microsoft Word, and PowerPoint presentations, as well as the ability to evaluate reliable sources of data, which the students can learn independently.

We plan to communicate with the program lecturers about implementing these soft skills through learning activities such as assigning group work, projects, report writing, and class presentations for the English majors to learn to work with other team members to exhibit leadership, develop problem-solving skills, foster service mindedness, and develop information technology skills.

### English courses that address the needs and interests of the stakeholders

The findings revealed that the stakeholders in the study prioritize listening and speaking skills, along with overall oral communicative competence. Furthermore, they view the knowledge of English structure and grammar for constructing meaningful sentences and phrases, which are important to ensure clarity in spoken communication.

Reading and writing skills are integrated into the teaching of English grammar, structure, and vocabulary, as this is believed to help strengthen English language proficiency. Translation skills and competencies are included in the new curriculum to meet the needs of students who want to pursue translation careers. Translation tools and technology are included in the program to meet the needs of students, program lecturers, and employers.

In EOP, students wish to pursue internships and careers in service industries such as hotels and the airlines. They also wish to be private school teachers, English tutors, or translators. Therefore, the program aims to design EOP courses tailored to their specific vocational needs, to facilitate their transition into their future careers.

As for third language courses, such as Mandarin and Japanese, these are considered essential for prospective careers, particularly within the service industry sector. We, together with the program lecturers, will formulate a strategic plan for these additional courses so that students can choose them as major electives.

Some stakeholders held a skeptical view of English literature courses as they perceived them to be irrelevant to real-life occupations. Therefore, the English language curriculum will employ this information by minimizing these courses and adjusting their lessons and contents to be more applicable rather than theoretical. This is because, for some stakeholders, particularly English program lecturers, these courses serve as a basis for understanding Western culture and perspectives that shape their way of thinking and living. To English program lecturers, literature and linguistics courses help develop critical thinking skills and the ability to have constructive discussions.

It was found that the literature courses, although irrelevant in some employers' and alumni's perspectives, will be included in the curriculum as reported by the program lecturers, who see them as necessary for understanding Western cultures and ways of life, as well as improving critical thinking skills. Although the revised curriculum does not include TQF1 as the stakeholder, this viewpoint, to some extent, corresponds to TQF1, which sets standards that students graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in English from any university in Thailand are required to learn English and American Literature. The inclusion of literature subjects in the redesigned curriculum, despite concerns from some employers about its relevance in some job

industries, reflects a deeper understanding of pedagogical core values of learning rather than immediate practical application. Literary texts can serve as an effective tool to boost students' critical thinking, creative thinking, and expression in EFL contexts. This is supported by Al-Selwi (2018), who recommended teaching literature in ESP classes since literature is a resource for language learning, and students can integrate all language skills, such as vocabulary and discourse skills.

In addition, Al-Thabhawee et al. (2025) suggested that literature can enhance ESP learning by broadening vocabulary and cultural understanding in a motivating way. The courses must be managed through careful text selection and creative pedagogy. According to Hossain (2024), the use of literature in language learning improves the learning experience because it exposes the students to authentic texts that encourage linguistic as well as cognitive development. Thus, literature is considered valuable in language learning because it offers meaningful and contextualized learning. Literature plays a fundamental role for both English majors and ESP students because it can be a good supplement if taught appropriately.

Therefore, the newly redesigned curriculum of the Bachelor of Arts in English at Maejo University will offer more interesting and up-to-date literature courses, as proposed by the program lecturers who teach them., One example is *Literature in New Media,* which includes contemporary issues in literary works and the adaptation of literary works through new media, such as movies and advertisements presented in social media, and Classical Mythology, which explores Greek-Roman mythological stories and the Bible's influence on reading Western literary works. This is expected to create a powerful learning environment that embraces the critical and creative thinking of the students in the program. *Classical Mythology*, for example, helps the students trace mythological influences. They can evaluate assumptions and critically examine how mythology shapes modern understanding and ways of life. These can indirectly transfer to how the students view the world, which requires critical and creative thinking.

As part of the required linguistic courses stated in TQF1 for the students graduating with a BA in English, *English around the World,* for example, is designed to be more comprehensive and to raise students' awareness of different varieties of English at phonological, lexical, and syntactic levels, as well as the role and status of English in various countries and territories. This corresponds to Boonsuk and Ambele (2021), who state that an English learning curriculum should improve students' English competence by introducing cross-cultural interaction and realistic communicative encounters. This should help prepare students for the real-world use of English, where non-conventional and non-standard English patterns are rapidly dominating.

**Conclusion**

In this study, we incorporated groups of stakeholders, including current students (first-year students), program lecturers, alumni, employers, and university administrators (e.g., the dean, deputy deans, and vice presidents) in curriculum design and development. This approach aligns with prior research (Aysu & Özcan, 2021; Čapková & Kroupová, 2017; Ergünay & Uysal, 2020; Johnson et al., 2021; Poedjiastutie & Oliver, 2017), regarding the involvement of various groups of stakeholders in curriculum design and development.

According to Brown (2016), the needs analysis results can be used in curriculum design and development, in that the information gained from stakeholders helps to define the learning outcomes of the learners and the curriculum. We found that the stakeholders involved in the study need to possess aural-oral communication skills and converse successfully in academic and professional settings. It was found that the occupations of the students and alumni that most of them wanted to work in are the service industry sectors, such as hotels and airlines. An additional language, such as Mandarin or Japanese, is also in demand by employers, alumni, and current students, as they believe that these additional languages can help them with their future careers. Rather than eliminating linguistics and literature courses from the

program, which some stakeholders, particularly employers and alumni, viewed as irrelevant for service industry jobs, the courses are revised to meet their needs. For example, the literature courses in the new curriculum are revised to help the students see the connections between literature and new media. Embracing technology in translation is also incorporated into the new curriculum, as translation is another career path that many first-year students in the program wish to pursue. Incorporating the data from groups of stakeholders helps us come up with the ELOs of the program.

As the first-year students were involved in the focus group discussion, we also suggest involving high school students in the design and development of the English curriculum for higher education. This can lead to more engaging and relevant English courses and content that match their needs. Based on Watanapokakul and Sitajalabhorn (2023), there is no one-size-fits-all approach in ELT. The current students' English learning needs may not align well with those of high school students who could be prospective students. Therefore, engaging high school students in ELT curriculum design and development as important stakeholders could help the higher education programs become more relevant.

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**Appendix A**

Interview guidelines for focus groups

**Focus Group 1: Employers from various industries (hotel staff, airline officers, schoolteachers, and translators)**

1. Which English language skill/subject do you find most beneficial for learning and work?
2. Do you think the literature courses are beneficial for your work, and if so, how?
3. How can the curriculum connect literature courses to your work?
4. Do you think the linguistics courses in the curriculum are beneficial for work, and if so, how?
5. How can the curriculum connect linguistics courses to your work?
6. Do you think the translation courses in the curriculum are beneficial for your work, and if so, how? How can the curriculum connect the translation courses to your field of work?
7. Do you think that if English majors learn an additional language to a certain level of proficiency, it would help them work in your organization, and if so, how?
8. Do you think the curriculum should add or design any additional courses to meet the future needs of your organization?
9. Which extracurricular activities do you think are beneficial for work and life skills development beyond academics?
10. What computer skills are useful and should be taught to supplement students' education for working in your organization in the future?

**Focus Group 2: First-year English majors at Maejo University**

1. What career do you want to pursue after graduating from the English major program in the Faculty of Liberal Arts at Maejo University?
2. What English language skills do you want to develop during your higher years of study?
3. What English language skills do you think are essential for a future career?
4. Which English-related subjects do you think are necessary for future study and work?
5. Besides academic knowledge, what extracurricular activities would you like to join to improve English language skills during your studies?
6. Besides academic knowledge, what extracurricular activities would you like to join to help promote the necessary life skills for work?
7. Would you like to develop computer skills for use in your studies? Which programs?
8. Would you like to develop computer skills for future work? Which programs?
9. Do you think additional language could help increase your chances of getting a job, and if so, why?
10. Which additional language do you think, both now and in the next 5 years, will help increase future job opportunities?
11. Would you like the curriculum to add any subjects related to English to help you get the job you want?

**Focus Group 3: Alumni working in fields of education, the airline industry, hospitality, and translation**

1. Which subjects in the English curriculum do you find most useful and have used to the greatest extent in your work?
2. Do you think the literature courses in the curriculum are beneficial for work and/or daily life, and if so, how?
3. Do you think the linguistics courses in the curriculum are useful for work and/or daily life, and if so, how?
4. Do you think the translation courses in the curriculum are useful for work and/or daily life, and if so, how?
5. Do you think being able to communicate to a certain extent in any additional languages can help increase your job opportunities, and if so, how?
6. Do you think any additional courses should be added or designed to meet future job requirements, including enhancing life skills?
7. Which extracurricular activities did you enjoy during your studies and found beneficial for your career and life skills development?
8. Which computer skills did you find useful during your studies, and what core skills should the program enhance in students during their studies?
9. During your work, what computer skills do you find useful for your job, and how does this course enhance students?
10. How do you see the curriculum linking life skills and entrepreneurial skills through course subjects or special activities so that students can apply them after graduation?

**Focus Group 4: English teachers from Maejo University and other higher education institutions in the Northern part of Thailand**

1. What are the main fields where your graduates find employment?
2. Which subjects in the English language curriculum and which communication skills do you find most beneficial, and which ones do you believe students have made the most use of in their careers? Please explain how literature, linguistics, and translation courses have supported your students to learn English better?
3. How much and how did you integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into your course?
4. What do you see as the main strengths and weaknesses of your students?
5. Have you integrated lessons in your course into your students' future work, and if so, how?
6. What communication skills do you primarily aim for your students to develop, both for their studies and future careers?
7. What extracurricular activities do you think can help develop English language skills?
8. How do you think you can link life skills and entrepreneurial skills through English lessons or other activities?
9. What do you see as obstacles to the development of students' communication skills and English language proficiency, and how can the curriculum and teaching staff address those problems and obstacles?
10. Do you think the current course subjects in the curriculum meet the needs of students' skills and knowledge development for future work? If so, how?
11. Would you like to design new courses for the curriculum? Please explain.

**Focus Group 5: University administrators**

1. Do you have any suggestions for creating new English courses that articulate the faculty's and the university's missions, such as what subjects they might cover?

2. In your opinion, how can the university help the program develop English language knowledge and skills for students in the program through various activities?

3. In your opinion, through which activities, lessons, or subjects should the curriculum link life skills and entrepreneurial skills?

4. What do you see as obstacles to the development of students in this program, and how can those problems and obstacles be addressed?

5. Do you think the current English curriculum is suitable for the university's philosophy and vision? If so, how?

6. What academic qualifications do you hope graduates from the English major will possess?

7. What kind of life skills and entrepreneurial skills do you hope graduates from the English major will possess?

8. In your opinion, what types of English activities/courses/lessons can be developed to align with the university's philosophy of "The University of Life"?

9. In what ways do you think the curriculum can help students in the program learn throughout their lives through activities, lessons, and courses?