



**UNIVERSITY  
OF TURKU**

**Perceptions of Academic Evaluation Practices and  
Evaluative Anxiety: A Study of Asian Students in  
International Master's Programs at Finnish  
Universities**

Education and Learning/Department of Education

Master's thesis

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26.05.2025

Turku

The originality of this thesis has been checked in accordance with the University of Turku quality assurance system using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Master's thesis

**Subject:** The master's degree program in Education and Learning (EdLearn)

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**Title:** Perceptions of Academic Evaluation Practices and Evaluative Anxiety: A Study of Asian Students in International Master's Programs at Finnish Universities

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**Number of pages:** 91

**Date:** 26.05.2025

### **Abstract.**

This study investigates how South and East Asian international students, coming from exam-oriented and teacher-centered educational systems, experience and adapt to the student-centered evaluation practices in Finnish universities. The study further explores the key differences in academic evaluation practices between Asian higher education systems and Finnish higher education as perceived by the Asian international students in Finnish universities. It also examines how the academic evaluation practices in Finnish higher education are related to the evaluative anxiety among Asian students, compared to their prior experiences in Asian exam-focused education systems. Finally, the study considers how Asian students in Finland adapt to unfamiliar academic evaluation practices and what coping strategies they employ. Grounded in Biggs' 3P model (presage, process, product), this study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design to explore the phenomenon. 45 South and East Asian students participated, providing data through a Webropol survey with both structured and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analyzed using t-tests, correlations, and regression, while qualitative responses were examined through deductive content analysis aligned with 3P model's sub themes.

Findings revealed that students generally viewed Finnish evaluation methods as more student-centered and flexible, but questioned their effectiveness, especially when compared to the exam-oriented systems common in their home countries. While many appreciated the formative and reflective nature of Finnish assessments, including peer feedback and flexible deadlines, unfamiliar methods such as group work and learning diaries often triggered evaluative anxiety. Students who perceived these methods as effective reported lower anxiety levels, whereas skepticism toward their relevance heightened academic stress and anxiety. Cultural mismatches and a prior experience on summative evaluation methods were significant contributing factors. Peer support emerged as the most common coping strategy, while university-provided resources were underutilized. Theoretically, the study demonstrated how Biggs' 3P model can be adapted to an intercultural higher education context, showing how presage factors interact with process variables to shape evaluative outcomes. Practically, the findings suggest that universities should enhance feedback practices, diversify evaluation formats, and provide clearer evaluation criteria. Institutions are also encouraged to strengthen orientation programs spanning from pre-arrival to mid-program, peer mentoring, and culturally responsive mental health and other support services.

**Key words:** Academic evaluation practices, Evaluative anxiety, Asian students, Finnish International Master's degree programs, Biggs' 3P model

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## 1 Introduction

Academic evaluation practices in higher education have been studied extensively due to the role they play in the quality of learning and to ways in which students perceive learning to be significant (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005). Students' perceptions of evaluation practices play a significant role in shaping their approaches to learning, that is, when students perceive evaluation practices as meaningful and aligned with learning goals, they are more likely to engage in deep learning strategies (Clinton, 2014). On the contrary, if the students perceive the evaluation practices to be stressful, anxiety provoking or unfair the students may engage in shallow learning leading to poor academic competence (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2005). Additionally, the academic evaluation methods used in higher education globally has expanded and has been able to successfully replace the conventional evaluation settings which included mostly of written exams and long essays. The contemporary academic evaluation practices in the European context are often competency based and therefore, incorporates practices such as group and individual projects, portfolios, peer assessments, oral presentations, learning diaries and simulations with the belief that they enhance professional development practical skills required in day to day contexts (Pereira et al., 2016).

Along with the variation in academic evaluation methods employed in universities worldwide, universities globally have started to admit students from diverse cultural backgrounds making education more globalized. Europeanization of higher education such as in Finland, has led to student mobility and making Finland an educational hub for international students (Renfors, 2021). Not only that, the student centered approach emphasized by the Finnish education system has presented an attractive or rather a unique environment for the international students, specifically those from Asian countries with exam-oriented educational systems. Thus, the amount of students preferring to study in Finland for their higher education has increased gradually, with more Asian students marking their presence within the system (Vierimaa, 2013). With reference to the Asian higher education systems, several empirical research highlights the widespread dominance of the exam orientated curriculum in the Asian higher education system where the teacher centered approach or the rote learning is the norm in most universities (Chung, 2019; Nawani & Goswami, 2020).

Given that diverse student groups, including those from Asia, pursue higher education in Finland, they often encounter academic evaluation methods that differ significantly from those in their home countries. Many Asian education systems emphasize exam-based, teacher-centered evaluation methods, whereas Finnish higher education utilizes a versatile, student-centered approach, which emphasizes diverse academic evaluation practices, deviating from uniform practices like examination. Adapting to this shift may present challenges, as students may be uncertain about how they are performing under these new evaluation methods (Nieminen et al., 2024). Having said that, this raises

important questions regarding the ability of Asian international students in the Finnish higher education system to adjust and whether this transition influences their levels of anxiety or evaluative anxiety of the assessments that they have submitted in the university or are ongoing.

From the perspective of the study's purpose, it is important to note that with the increasing number of Asian international students studying in Finnish universities understanding the academic evaluation practices in the Asian context is particularly important as there is a significant difference in the academic evaluation practices or assessments in the Asian and Finnish higher education systems. This study will dive into understanding how this difference in academic evaluation practices between the two education systems could contribute to the evolvment of evaluative anxiety among students who have transitioned from a South or East Asian education system to a Finnish higher education system. Having said that, the main objectives of the study are to understand the key differences in assessment practices between Asian higher education systems and Finnish higher education, secondly, to apprehend how the assessment practices in a competency based Finnish higher education could result in Evaluative anxiety among Asian students, compared to their prior experiences in Asian exam-focused education systems and finally recognize on how Asian students in Finland adapt to unfamiliar assessment methods, and what coping strategies do they employ if they do experience any evaluative anxiety related to unfamiliar academic evaluation methods. In addition to that, highlighting the Asian international students adds value as they make the largest segment of Finland's international student population. Due to the limited availability of research and comprehensive data on academic evaluation systems in the Maldives, Bhutan and Afghanistan, this study will focus only on India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal when comparing South Asian academic evaluation practices to those in the Finnish higher education system. Similarly, due to limited access to comprehensive research and differences in educational transparency, this study will focus only on China, Japan, and South Korea when examining East Asian academic evaluation systems.

In relation to the outline of the research methods and data analysis, this study integrates both qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed methods approach to explore the perceptions of Asian students regarding the different academic evaluation methods used in their programs at the Finnish universities and if there is any association with evaluative anxiety. The research design of the current study utilized a structured survey incorporating both scaled multiple choice items and open ended questions. Data was collected by sharing the questionnaire via email within the researcher's university and was sent to other Finnish universities in Finland to maximize participation. The sample size is 45 participants specifically focusing on Masters Students from South and East Asian backgrounds, studying in Finnish universities in Finland. The data collected was analysed in alignment with the sample size and is described in depth in the methodological approach.

Additionally, the contribution of this study stems from its ability to provide meaningful findings into the academic experiences of South and East Asian international students, specifically, on how the international students adapt to the different academic evaluation methods in Finnish universities. Moreover, as Finnish universities continue to emphasize inclusivity and diversity in higher education (Nieminen & Henrick, 2022), understanding the learning experiences of Asian students would help the universities to refine their assessment strategies, enhance student engagement, and ensure that the evaluation methods of the teaching modules effectively support diverse learning backgrounds. Additionally, a deeper insight into the academic evaluation perceptions of international students in higher education can contribute to a broader discussions on internationalization, student wellbeing and the effectiveness of the different evaluation practices in fostering academic growth.

In addition, research on differences in academic evaluation methods has been relatively limited, with most existing studies primarily focusing on the Finnish education system (Nieminen et al., 2024). Although these studies shed light on Finnish academic practices, they often overlook the diverse educational backgrounds and prior evaluation exposures of international students. Little attention has been given to how academic evaluation methods can be designed to effectively accommodate student diversity within the Finnish higher education context (Nieminen, 2024). With the rise international students enrolments at Finnish universities (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025a), understanding their perspectives on academic evaluation methods is essential for fostering inclusive learning environments. Furthermore, this research will specifically concentrate on Asian students, specifically, in the current study the east and south Asian student perspectives will be considered as they account for the considerable number of the international student population studying in Finnish universities, thus, assessing their academic journeys in adapting to Finnish assessment practices will provide valuable insights into potential improvements in academic evaluation methods to better support student success and well-being.

## **2 International student mobility, cultural contrasts in academic evaluation practices and link with evaluative anxiety**

Global trends in higher education have transformed patterns in international student mobility, academic evaluation practices and learning worldwide. Finland, has become a well-regarded destination for higher education, especially for students from Asia due to the establishment of affordable tuition fees and scholarship offers (Juusola et al., 2021). Moreover, with regards to the academic evaluation practices, it is evident that majority of the Finnish universities implement student centered, formative evaluation methods to evaluate student performance with the belief that it promotes lifelong learning and critical thinking skills (Ursin, 2020). Nevertheless, this may contrast with the predominantly summative, exam oriented academic evaluation practices of Asian higher education (Leong et al., 2018; Nawani & Goswami, 2020), and thus, the students arriving from Asian countries may experience a sense of unfamiliarity with the formative Finnish education system resulting in anxiety on how the assessments will be evaluated (Nieminen, 2022).

### **2.1 International student mobility in Finland**

The expansion and extension of higher education beyond national borders is known to have begun in the latter half of the 19th century in western countries. By the end of the century, countries such as Great Britain and Germany had already become leaders in global higher education, resulting in high levels of international student mobility. It is also known that the majority of international students came from less developed and developing countries, as their own nations lacked the capacity to provide the resources and facilities they required to excel in their national countries (Choudaha, 2017). In Finland, the internationalization of higher education began in the 1980s and early 1990s, with the Ministry of Education and Culture taking a leading role in shaping Finnish higher education policy with the expectation of creating economies that are knowledge-based. The focus gradually shifted from student exchanges and cooperation with foreign educational institutions to offering several degree programs in English for international students (Juusola et al., 2021). With the increase in the wide range of English taught programs in the universities, more and more international students began to prefer Finland as their study destination.

In addition, statistical data indicates that the increase in foreign students dates back to the early 2000s when the number of students grew to 7,000, compared to the 1,500 students who arrived in Finland in the early 1990s. During this period, education and labour policy goals emphasized that foreign degree students coming to Finland would help promote the internationalization of higher education, enhance international and European competitiveness, and provide skilled labour to Finland's aging workforce (Aalto, 2003), cited in (Juusola et al., 2021). According to statistics from the Finnish National Agency for Education conducted in 2022, Asian students were the largest group

that were arriving in Finland for higher education lasting for more than 3 months with a percentage of 8% after Europe with a percentage of 79%, Which clearly shows that Finland has been able to attract Asian students to study in Finnish education and that they make a considerable number in Finland (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025a). Consequently, the number of foreign degree students has risen to 15952 in 2023, with majority of the applicants applying to fields such as Business, Administration, Information and communication technology (The Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025). However, less than half of the graduates from Finnish universities are eventually employed in Finland, due to barriers such as the Finnish language, complicated residence permit regulations, and limited professional networks within the country (Juusola et al., 2021).

Having said that, the question on what makes Finland so attractive to international Asian students has always been a topic of discussion, for instance, according to research evidence, one major reason as to why Asian students choose Finland for higher studies is the country's reputable education system. Moreover, according to the World Economic Forum (2018), Finland's recognition as a top acclaimed education system and ranking top in global higher education ranking attracts Asian students who may be solely looking for a first class education. Moreover, another reason as to why Asian students may opt to study in Finland is the availability of scholarships and also the lower tuition fees compared to other countries such as United States or UK (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025b). Furthermore, the tuition fees for non EEU/EEA students pursuing a Bachelors or Master's degree would typically range between €8,000 and €20,000 per year, and it also depends on the university and the program studied (The Finnish National Agency for Education, 2025). Another major reason for majority of the Asian students to migrate to Finland for education is the agreeable immigration policy guidelines and long term residence opportunities which may allow Asian students to graduate and work in Finland (Abdin, 2023)

## **2.2 General view of academic evaluation methods used in higher education**

Academic evaluation practices in universities are usually explored from multiple viewpoints, for instance evaluation practices has been considered to influence learning and study techniques and has been considered an objective measurement tool in academics (Postareff et al., 2012) while other researcher have attempted to study it in the context of inclusion and equity (J. H. Nieminen, 2024). Given the different perspectives on how academic evaluation in higher education is considered to be, several studies have indicated that students are receptive on the content and the manner in which they will be assessed as achievement in studies is an important aspect that dominates the journey in higher education (Struyven et al., 2004). Further studies on academic evaluation methods in higher education has indicated that there is now a shift from the traditional forms of summative evaluation methods to

more contemporary formative evaluation methods in higher education. Moreover, it is empirically assumed that summative evaluation methods such as final exams, standardized tests, capstone projects and even dissertations focus more on memorisation and grades rather than on individual learning process, compared to formative methods such as feedback sessions, peer discussions, self-assessments, learning diaries which encourage improved knowledge and comprehensive knowledge of the academic material (Postareff et al., 2012).

The question of whether summative or formative evaluation methods are more effective has long been a topic of discussion, and universities typically choose the type of evaluation method that best aligns with their program goals. Summative methods offer a comprehensive evaluation of student achievement through grading, certification, and institutional accountability. However, studies have shown that while summative methods effectively measure the outcomes of learning, they do not directly contribute to the learning process itself. Further research also suggests that an overreliance on summative methods can increase test anxiety and promote surface learning, rather than fostering a comprehensive knowledge of the learning material (Sambell et al., 2012). In addition to that, a systematic review showed that formative methods are effective in improving the student learning outcomes in universities and they also enhance self-directed learning by guiding students to identify their strengths and weaknesses while encouraging a more profound understating of the subject (Henderson et al., 2019).

Further empirical evidence has indicated that formative assessments are conducted throughout the course to monitor the progress of student learning throughout the instructional or academic period, while summative evaluations are conducted at the end of the semester or year. Additionally, it could be presumed that the primary goal of formative assessment is to examine the progress of student learning and to engage in constructive feedback on their work. This would result in enhanced learning in the students and improved teaching in the instructors, moreover, the instructors could adjust their instructional methods to better meet the needs of the students, offering a more responsive and adaptive teaching environment contributing to an enhanced educational outcomes (Pereira et al., 2016). Consequently, incorporating both formative and summative academic evaluation methods is significant to obtain a holistic evaluation of student learning.

Similarly, it is widely presumed that the rapid development of technology, education, and globalization has directly influenced the competencies required from the university graduates entering the workforce. In turn, this has led universities to modify their academic evaluation practices to assess students in ways that support lifelong practical skills, such as problem-solving, interpersonal interaction, and literacy (Stenström & Tynjälä, 2009). Moreover, Guile and Griffiths (2001) explored various frameworks to understand how knowledge is acquired both in academic settings and professional environments. One such framework, which is known as the work process approach,

emphasizes a close connection between job related experiences and knowledge development, proposing that students adapt to the requirements of the work context by participating in different communities of practice and collaborating what they have learnt and applying it in the practical context of their work. Therefore, it could be fairly justifiable to say that designing assessments that meets expectations of the work life could be complex (Nieminen, 2024).

Not only that, further research on evaluation practices in universities may differ based on different teaching cultures which may result in different evaluation practices executed in the academic world. Additionally, it has also been suggested that different disciplines could influence the teaching strategies and evaluation practices, in other words, teachers in the field of hard sciences such as Maths, Physics, chemistry or astronomy engage in content-focused teaching and therefore may rely on exams as a form of evaluation method, while on the other hand, teachers in the field of soft sciences such as anthropology, education or sociology maybe more learning-focused prioritizing student engagement and active participation as forms of academic evaluation (Postareff et al., 2012). Furthermore, it is now been academically discussed that when developing academic evaluation methods in higher education it is important to develop teaching methods and resources as well, so that there is pedagogical awareness among academics on how different evaluation methods in universities could impact the learning process (Postareff et al., 2012).

### **2.3 Academic evaluation methods in Finnish higher education**

Finnish universities often employ enhancement-oriented evaluation methods in their assessment procedures, with the objective of enhancing the quality of various study programs. As a result, Finnish higher education favours formative evaluation methods over summative ones. Consequently, Finnish universities are responsible for evaluating their own academic processes and outcomes (Ursin, 2020). In line with formative evaluation practices, the evaluation efforts of Finnish universities are supported by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). FINEEC conducts evaluations of the assessment techniques established within Finnish universities and assists them in making improvements to promote internationalization, academic innovation, and continuous development. This support is provided while respecting the autonomy of universities to develop their own quality assurance systems tailored to their specific study programs and institutional needs (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre, 2024).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Finnish universities have diverse methods for assessing student learning. Each university typically outlines expected learning outcomes at the course, program, and degree levels, which suggests a competence-based learning approach (Nieminen et al., 2024). This means that the focus is on students developing and demonstrating specific skills and knowledge. Assessment methods vary; some universities use teacher-centered approaches, such as

exams and grades, while others adopt student-centered methods that involve self-assessment and reflection. In addition, some institutions incorporate peer assessment techniques, such as mentoring or group evaluations. Often, a combination of teacher-led, self-, and peer assessment is used to provide a more balanced evaluation of student learning. This flexible and varied approach reflects the Finnish education system's emphasis on student autonomy, active learning, and the development of competencies that are valuable in both academic and real-world settings (Ursin, 2020).

Given the involvement of the FINEEC with the audits on quality of the programs the University and the respective programs have professional autonomy on designing the evaluation criteria, tailored and specified to meet the requirements of the programs, for instance, according to a study by Nieminen et al (2004) on undergraduate students in the pharmacy program at the University of Helsinki, showed that the instructional method was primarily traditional, consisting of mass lectures and laboratory assignments, along with training focused mainly on developing professional skills required for success in the practical context. Furthermore, research on various academic evaluation methods indicated that teaching and evaluation practices are evolving and will vary significantly across different disciplines at Finnish universities. Similarly, a case study which investigated on how summative evaluation methods literacy is integrated into the curricula of pre-service language teacher education programs at three universities in Sweden and Finland found that summative evaluation methods were underrepresented in the program compared to formative evaluation methods. And the authors further argued that since teachers frequently use summative methods in actual classroom settings, teacher education programs should provide more focused instruction on summative evaluation methods to prepare future teachers for real world demands and suggests a more equal representation of both formative and summative evaluation methods to be covered to support effective teaching practices (Yildirim et al., 2024).

#### **2.4 Educational system in Asia and academic evaluation techniques.**

It could be presumed that the higher education system across Asia including developing and developed nations is undergoing rapid expansion in terms of economic development and societal advancement, which has also resulted in an increase in enrolments. South Asia such as India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have established ambitious plans to enhance their education system in the Universities achieving noticeable development in the recent years. Nevertheless, south Asia also faces several educational challenges such as ensuring equitable access and sustaining quality in education (Tilak, 2012). Similarly countries in the east Asia with notable education systems such as China, South Korea and Singapore have also achieved prominent focus worldwide due to their advancement in technology and innovations, yet disparities exist which needs to be addressed (Horta, 2023).

Asian education contexts typically employ a strong teacher-centered approach, characterized by a clear hierarchical structure and a formal relationship between teachers and students. Educators are primarily responsible for initiating and sustaining classroom discussions and guiding the learning process. As a result, students may avoid participating in class discussions or academic debates (Sofyan et al., 2023). Additionally, it can be assumed that students in Asian educational settings are often taught to be passive listeners who rarely question their teachers, leading to Asian students focusing more on rote learning than conceptual understanding, tending to engage in shallow learning strategies, and placing significant reliance on textbook (Pham Thi Hong, 2011). However, modern research has changed this stereotypical view on labelling Asian students as rote learners, and have highlighted that Asian students mostly memorize with understanding rather than mechanical or rote memorizing and are quite similar to the study methods adopted by western countries such as Australia (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). Not only that, further studies have demonstrated that Asian international students tend to be academically involved and manage their studies and perform highly in their assignments in the higher education theory (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001).

Consequently, the student-centered approach commonly seen in Western and European education systems may be perceived as unsuitable or unfamiliar in many Asian contexts. Furthermore, it is well known that Asian higher education frequently relies on summative evaluation methods, with standardized tests and end-of-year written examinations commonly used to assess student learning (Pham Thi Hong, 2011). However, research indicates that an increasing number of Asian higher education systems are now striving to adopt student-centered approaches within their institutions (Pham Thi Hong, 2011). With regards to the academic evaluation methods in Asian Universities, different authorities within and out of the Universities are involved in deciding the type of evaluation methods for different study programs. For instance, the ministry of education in almost all Asian countries and the study program instructors are responsible in deciding the academic evaluation methods and has a huge involvement in the designing and implementation of the evaluation methods in universities within the Asian context (Roy & Misra, 2021; Pham Thi Hong, 2011). In order to understand the different academic evaluation practices in South and East Asian higher education it is vital to examine each in depth, and thus, the following sections will delve in to exploring on how South and East students are evaluated in their study programs.

#### 2.4.1. South Asian higher education system and their major evaluation methods

Unlike the European or Western education systems, the Asian education system has many differences. Despite being geographically close to each other, most Asian countries are economically unevenly developed. With regards to the size of their education systems, India has the largest higher education system, with approximately 21 million student enrolments. This is followed by Bangladesh and Pakistan, with 2 million and 1.8 million students, respectively. Student numbers in Sri Lanka are

relatively small, with 0.23 million enrolments, while Nepal has 0.39 million students enrolled in higher education (Jandhyala, 2015). The lowest enrolments would be from Bhutan and the Maldives, with 12,689 student enrolments and 10,000 enrolments, respectively (Gyeltshen & Dorji, 2020). With regards to the academic evaluation methods practices in South Asia, the summative exam oriented system has been dominating the higher education system and several universities are trying to incorporate more of formative methods of evaluating students in to the higher education system. Having sated that, the following sections will elaborate on the South Asian academic evaluation systems of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.

### **Academic Evaluation Methods in Indian and Pakistani Universities**

Indian Universities are on the assumption that traditional methods of evaluating students have always been a limitation as it provides limited pedagogical tools and methods of evaluating student learning (Godbole et al., 2024). Since the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, summative evaluation practices consisting of written examinations, multiple choice tests along with a standardized curriculum were the main academic evaluation methods in Indian universities, with rote learning or memorization of facts being the most adopted learning approach by students in higher education (Godbole et al., 2024). In support to this statement, a study investigating on the academic evaluation methods in Engineering Universities found that summative evaluation methods such as course examinations and annual examinations dominated along with a teacher centered traditional learning approach, and the students have raised their voice the need for more formative evaluation methods such as problem based and project based evaluation methods as they believed that it helps to enhance engineering skills (Choudhury, 2019).

Additionally, by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the National Education Policy implemented in 2020, the Indian education system needed new methods that would enhance the development of skills and lifelong learning, calling for the need for more formal academic evaluation practices (Khanikar, 2024). Moreover, despite the lack of formative evaluation methods, several studies have highlighted on how effective formal assessments are in the Indian education context, for instance, a study conducted on the use of online formative tools and practices such as Google forms, Padlet, online presentations, discussions and feedback to learn and complete in class assignments indicated positive attitudes among students. Additionally, it was also speculated that the use of formative evaluation method enhanced student engagement with the lesson while improving the overall scores of the assignments the students were required to submit (Mahapatra & Sharma, 2021). Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the various academic evaluation methods used across different programs in Indian Universities and their effectiveness in fostering learning. Moreover, regardless of the

attempts to establish more formative evaluative methods in Higher education, summative evaluative methods dominates the higher education system in India up to date.

In the context of Pakistan, universities primarily follow annual and semester-based summative examination systems. Most academic programs utilize semester examinations, which are widely regarded as more effective in promoting students' reading and study habits. These summative evaluation methods provide students with a clear objective to engage with their coursework and perform well in upcoming assessments (Khan et al., 2012). Additionally, moderation and quality assurance of academic evaluation methods in Pakistani universities are overseen by Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs), which are responsible for implementing the quality standards set by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) (Jabeen et al., 2024).

Additionally, higher education in Pakistan is gradually adapting to societal advancements and the integration of technology within the education system, as highlighted in Pakistan's Education Policy established in 2009. As part of this shift, Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) has been implemented to collect feedback on how more formative evaluation methods could be introduced (Ahmad et al., 2021). Additionally, a study investigating the use of formative evaluation methods revealed that some universities have begun awarding sessional marks based on formative evaluation components, including written assignments, quizzes, presentations, class discussions, attendance, and student engagement with course content. Moreover, research conducted on undergraduate students in Pakistan found that students preferred online assessments and other formative evaluation methods over traditional summative assessments. However, challenges such as technological limitations and the reluctance of senior faculty to fully embrace formative practices remain ongoing issues (Rubab & Imran, 2023). Notably, medical faculties in several Pakistani universities have started placing greater emphasis on critical thinking and have begun shifting towards formative evaluation methods. These faculties are moving away from conventional summative assessments such as oral exams, multiple-choice tests, and essay questions, and are adopting alternative methods like observational evaluations, clinical assessments, task-oriented evaluations, and structured interviews (Khan et al., 2012).

### **Academic Evaluation Methods in Sri Lankan, Bangladeshi and Nepalese Universities**

According to the University Grants Commission of Sri Lanka, academic evaluation practices are broadly classified into two categories: formative and summative. Formative assessments primarily provide feedback on overall student performance, while summative assessments typically consist of written and oral examinations (Perera et al., 2023). Moreover, it is relevant to note that formative evaluations do not contribute to final module results; instead, they serve as feedback mechanisms from

instructors allowing for the identification of educational challenges the students may have. In contrast, summative evaluations constitute a key element in designing and modification of university curricula, where the results obtained from summative assessments are frequently used to revise academic programs in higher education institutions (Dhanapala, 2021). Additionally, many university programs in Sri Lanka primarily assess student knowledge through summative evaluation methods, including mid-semester and final examinations. This reliance on summative assessments has raised concerns regarding the lack of emphasis on skill-based learning, prompting faculty members and students to advocate for increased use of formative evaluation methods (Alahakoon, 2023).

In addition to that, several studies underscore the significance of incorporating formative evaluation methods into Sri Lankan higher education. For instance, research on a plant physiology course at the Open University of Sri Lanka implemented open-book tests and online self-assessments as alternatives to traditional summative assessments. The findings indicated that students demonstrated increased engagement and enthusiasm for the module (Senadheera & Kulasekara, 2022). Similarly, a broader study on evaluation methods in Sri Lankan universities revealed that formative assessments effectively measure not only theoretical knowledge but also emotional intelligence and practical skills necessary for professional success (Mahroof, 2013). These findings highlight the need for a reassessment of the current academic evaluation framework in Sri Lanka and to create a more comprehensive educational experience that enhances both knowledge acquisition and skill development, better preparing students for the requirements of the workforce. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the different evaluation methods used for different study programs and on how redesigning the evaluation methods could influence student learning.

With reference to academic evaluation methods in Bangladesh, rote learning with an emphasis on summative assessments is prevalent in Bangladeshi universities. The academic evaluation methods vary across institutions; however, greater emphasis is placed on summative, exam-oriented approaches (Chowdhury, 2016). Moreover, studies exploring different academic evaluation methods indicate that most assessment practices primarily focus on measuring and monitoring learning rather than fostering practical learning skills. These studies further highlight the need to integrate formative evaluation methods into higher education curricula (Al Mamun et al., 2025). For instance, research on communicative language teaching programs in private universities and engineering programs in public universities (Badjie, 2019) confirms the dominant presence of summative assessment practices. These studies also advocate for the implementation of formative assessments (Hossain & Hasan, 2020).

Additionally, there is evidence that instructors in Bangladesh require training to develop evaluation methods that align with the requirements of specific study programs. However, the development of assessment literacy, including teachers' ability to design, adapt, and implement

authentic or performance-based assessments to meet 21st-century competencies, remains a challenge (Chowdhury, 2016). Several studies have also highlighted that implementing formative assessment methods in Bangladesh is challenging due to factors such as limited resources, large student populations, and insufficient teacher training on formative assessment techniques (Mohamad Hanefar et al., 2022). Furthermore, research on the use of formative evaluation methods in Bangladeshi universities remains scarce.

It is not surprising that Nepal's higher education system also relies heavily on summative, exam-oriented evaluation methods. Acharya (2022) describes these methods as predominantly paper-and-pencil tests, characterized by a teacher-centered and theory-based approach (Acharya, 2022). Empirical evidence further suggests that Nepalese higher education has rarely, if ever, incorporated project work, presentations, or group work as formal evaluation methods within the curriculum. Instead, the system prioritizes rote memorization over critical thinking practical skills among graduates (Timilsena, 2024). However, while formative methods such as peer discussions and project-based activities are occasionally used in classrooms, they are not formally recognized as evaluation methods. These are considered alternative assessment approaches, which Nepal has yet to develop and implement on a national scale (Neupane, 2023). Furthermore, significant challenges hinder the establishment of formative evaluation methods, including limited resources, political interference, and a lack of alignment with global educational trends (Timilsena, 2024).

Nonetheless, several initiatives have been undertaken to modernize and enhance evaluation practices in Nepalese universities. For instance, the Higher Education Reform Project (HERP) and initiatives led by the University Grants Commission (UGC) are actively working to integrate competency-based assessments, incorporate technology, and mitigate political influences to align the system with global educational standards (Timilsena, 2024). There is a lack of research on various evaluation methods in Nepali universities, highlighting the need for further studies to explore and assess alternative assessment approaches and their potential impact on higher education. In essence, it is clear that all South Asian education systems discussed in this study implement similar academic evaluation practices, with year-end or semester exams dominating assessment methods. Moreover, the study emphasizes that formative evaluation practices are on the rise and may soon be implemented, although they are not yet widely adopted.

#### 2.4.2. East Asian higher education system and their major evaluation methods

Research suggests that higher education systems in East Asia are predominantly examination-driven and are hugely influenced by the Confucian heritage which emphasizes on memorization on the content studied, obedience and passivity (Bacquet, 2020). For instance, in Japan, college entrance examinations are regarded as a fair and standardized method for selecting students (Leong et al.,

2018). Currently, approximately 2.89 million students are enrolled in 780 universities across Japan (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2019). Similarly, in South Korea, the total number of international student enrolments is 207,125, with academic evaluation methods varying across different programs (L.Yoon, 2025). In China, higher education encompasses approximately 40 million students enrolled in 3,012 colleges and universities nationwide, with varying academic evaluation methods and evolving formative methods (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2025). These figures highlight the scale and structure of higher education in East Asia, and the academic evaluation methods varies between countries and their respective programs (Leong et al., 2018). With that in note, the following sub sections elaborates the academic evaluation practices in East Asian Universities.

### **Academic Evaluation methods in Chinese, Japanese and South Korean Universities.**

Chinese universities have a long history of employing summative evaluation methods and are known for their teacher-centered and textbook-centered learning orientation, not only that, the Chinese higher education system further upholds the belief that the use of examinations to measure learning is a justifiable method (Cheng et al., 2015). Several studies support the notion that academic evaluation methods in Chinese universities are exam-oriented and require students to master content fluently. Moreover, the majority of research on academic evaluation methods in Chinese higher education has focused on English language courses. For instance, a study by Wang and Cheng (2020) cited in (Cheng et al., 2015) on first-year Chinese students studying English highlighted that students perceived the evaluation methods as highly test-oriented. Similarly, a study investigating English language assessment in universities indicated that summative evaluation methods, particularly multiple-choice questions, are commonly used to assess students' writing, reading, and listening skills (Qu & Zhang, 2013). Furthermore, a study examining Chinese students' perceptions of academic evaluation methods in a transnational higher education (TNHE) program in Australia found that in China, evaluation methods were predominantly content-based examinations with minimal formative assessments and limited student autonomy, whereas students experienced greater autonomy and a more diverse range of assessments in Australian universities (Dai et al., 2020).

Education in Japan is expected to strongly correlate with the expectations of the practical needs in the society and as Japan employs an achievement –oriented society known as *gakurekishakai* (Bacquet, 2020), therefore with reference to Japanese universities, the academic evaluation methods becomes more varied and depends mostly upon the specific course of study, however, majority of the studies indicate that Japanese higher education relies heavily on summative evaluation methods (Bacquet, 2020). In support to this, a review article in Japan has stated that Japanese universities

follow the traditional lecture style teaching in classrooms with little or no attention to formative academic methods further justifying the dominant existence of summative academic evaluation within the University context (Takehiko, 2012). Moreover, a similar research on improving academic evaluation methods in Japanese University English courses also pointed out that students are required to take a written test and submit a written essay and rarely get feedback on their work submitted (Forsythe, 2015). In addition to this, a study on Japanese students perception of blended learning indicated that the instructors mainly used open book quizzes, quizzes and listening to test the knowledge while also using formative academic evaluation methods such as providing feedback and online media to keep students engaged, and found that students performed well on summative evaluations although they preferred formative methods highlighting the fact that students have been trained to perform well in summative evaluation method (Roux et al., 2018).

Consequently, it is not surprising that South Korean Universities also have an exam oriented summative academic evaluation system as it has roots in the Confucian philosophy, which promotes rote learning and high stake examinations (Kwon et al., 2017). Moreover, it is evident in research that South Korean universities measure performance through midterms, final exams and standardized MCQ tests, prioritising high achievement and completion among university students (Kwon et al., 2017). A similar study on Korean university surprisingly indicated that university students had difficulty in preparing presentations, writing reports and working in group projects although they may perform exceptionally well in exams, highlighting the lack of formative evaluation methods and the dominance of summative evaluation methods within the higher education system ( Lee & Lee, 2012). Moreover, a study done on investigating the educational differences in South Korea and American universities found that South Korean university teachers gave better results for the students who were able to accurately recall the learnt content when given a test ( Lee et al., 2017). Nevertheless, several universities in South Korea is attempting to foster formative methods by enhancing the generic skills such as interpersonal and intrapersonal skills in students by implementing their own required core competencies and modifying the curriculum present (Lee & Lee, 2022).

## **2.5 Evaluative anxiety related to academic evaluation methods**

Evaluative anxiety could be defined as the psychological distress or fear that students experience in response to academic assessments, and is often linked with test anxiety (Pereira et al., 2016) and sometimes it extends beyond exams to include other forms of evaluation methods such as presentations, essays and competency based evaluations (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). Research indicates that university students often experience high levels of assessment-related anxiety when their course assessments are being evaluated. Additionally, transitioning from different educational backgrounds may also serve as a triggering factor (Dai, 2023). Evaluative anxiety associated with various academic

assessment methods used in universities has been extensively studied in both social psychology and educational psychology, primarily due to its significant impact on academic performance and learning outcomes. It is well established that evaluative anxiety is not limited to formal examinations but can also extend to essays, oral presentations, and group activities. The level of anxiety often depends on individual temperament and is subjective in nature (Finn, 2015). Further research indicates that evaluative anxiety is also influenced by the value of an assessment relative to the overall course grade. In other words, the higher importance placed on the final result, the greater the level of evaluative anxiety experienced by students (Finn, 2015). Moreover, there is an ongoing debate regarding the assumption made by many western and european universities that their assessment methods are universally applicable (Dai, 2023). This assumption often overlooks the cultural differences that influence educational practices and expectations. For instance, many Asian educational systems emphasize rote memorization and standardized testing, with less focus on personal reflection and critical analysis. As a result, Asian students may struggle to adapt to academic evaluation methods in Western contexts, which often prioritize critical thinking, personal reflection, and independent learning (Tilakaratna et al., 2019).

Tilakaratna et al. (2019) further argues that critical thinking and reflective writing may not align well with the academic evaluation methods familiar to many Asian students, making it challenging for them to succeed in assignments that require these skills. A similar study examining Chinese students' perceptions of academic evaluation methods in British universities found a lack of guidance and support systems. The universities in question appeared to assume that international students would naturally acquire the strategies needed to meet coursework expectations (Dai, 2023). Additionally, the study revealed that critical reading and thinking which are highly valued in the European academic context were among the most difficult skills for these students to develop (Dai, 2023). The inclusion of personal reflections, proper citation practices, and the application of theoretical concepts to real-life contexts were also reported as particularly challenging for many international students (Haijing Tu, 2018).

A study conducted in New Zealand on the types of academic evaluations that caused the most anxiety among Asian international students found that oral presentations and written tests, particularly those scheduled after the completion of the course, were the most anxiety-inducing. The study also revealed that group work and group oral presentations were often ineffective in promoting learning, as one member of the group might dominate the task, leaving others less involved. In contrast, written assignments and essays were perceived as more helpful, facilitating deeper understanding of key concepts within the program of study (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). Additionally, the same study found that a central component of evaluative anxiety across different assessment methods was cognitive worry, which often emerged when students lacked confidence in completing

specific tasks. Similarly, a case study conducted by Straker (2020) on a management course at a British university highlighted that group work posed particular challenges for Asian students, primarily due to language barriers and differences in communication styles (Straker, 2020). Despite the amount of literature on evaluative anxiety, there is a noticeable gap in research specifically examining how diverse academic evaluation practices in European universities may contribute to evaluative anxiety among Asian students. Given that many Asian students are primarily trained through exam-based assessment systems, they may experience heightened anxiety when faced with unfamiliar evaluation methods such as reflective writing, group projects, or oral presentations. This lack of alignment between prior academic training and new evaluative expectations underscores the need for more focused research in this area.

In contrast to summative assessments, several studies have shown that formative evaluation methods can help reduce evaluative anxiety. For example, Cisero (2006) found that undergraduate psychology students who engaged in reflective journaling reported lower levels of stress and anxiety with their studies. Similarly, Cassady and Gridley (2005) demonstrated that online formative assessments were associated with reduced test anxiety and improved academic performance among university students. Together, these findings suggest that formative practices, such as journaling and ongoing feedback could create a supportive and less stressful learning environment, ultimately contributing to both emotional well-being and academic success.

### 3 Applying Biggs' 3P model to explore the link between academic evaluation practices and evaluative anxiety

Finnish higher education system has been able attract international students, particularly those from South and East Asian countries. These students bring a range of educational and cultural expectations, especially with regards to academic evaluation methods. Comprehending how these Asian students perceive and adapt to the diverse and often unfamiliar academic evaluation methods in Finnish higher education is essential for fostering inclusive learning environments. To comprehensively understand this phenomenon, this study adopts Biggs' (1989) 3P model of learning (Figure 1), comprising Presage, Process, and Product factors, as the core theoretical framework.

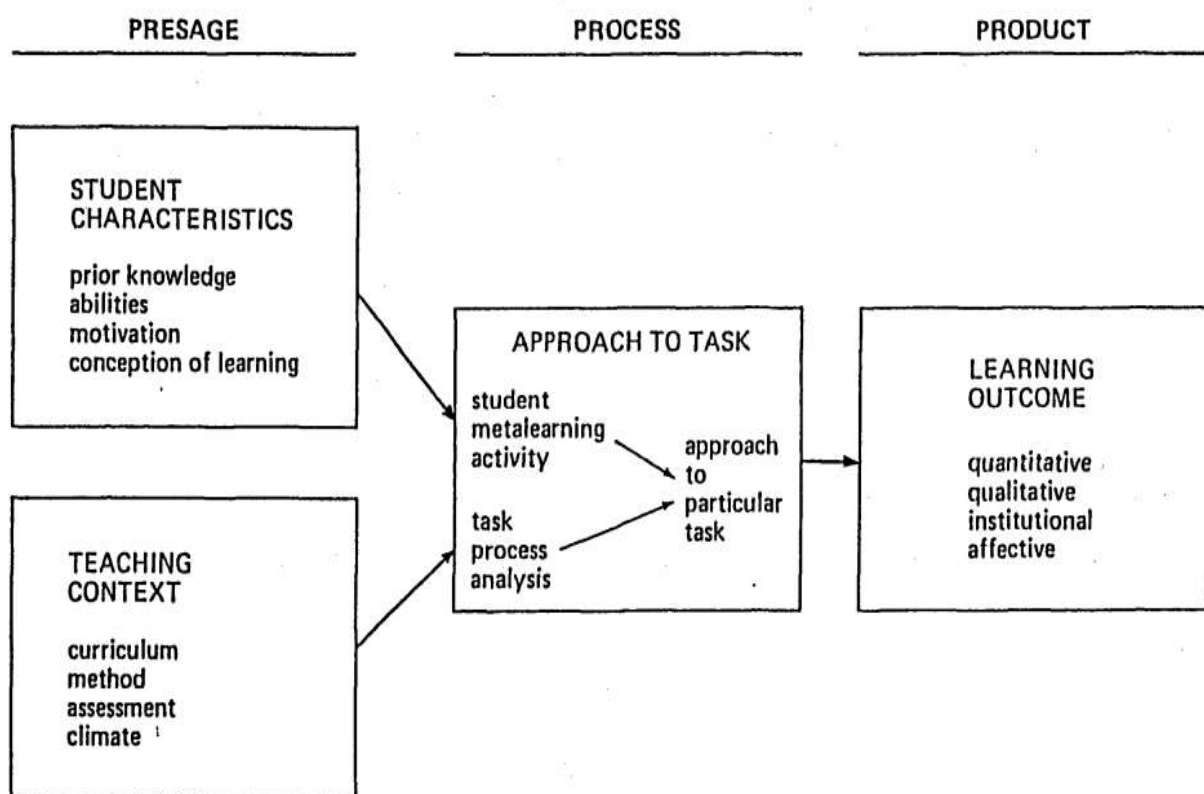


Figure 1: Biggs' 3P Learning Process Model (1989): (Permission to use the model has been granted by the author)

Although Biggs' (1989) 3P model of learning is over three decades old, it is still being widely used in academic research due to its ability to offer a comprehensive structure for examining the dynamic interaction between learners' prior experiences, the immediate learning environment, and learning outcomes, making it relevant for exploring how Asian students experience evaluative anxiety and perceive evaluation practices in Finnish universities (Biggs, 1989). Numerous recent studies have

employed the model to investigate international student adaptation, learning experiences and difference in academic evaluation methods utilized in different universities (Zhang, 2000) (Haverila, 2012) (Hirano, 2021). These recent empirical research indicate that the 3P model is capable of analysing how culturally and educationally diverse students experience unfamiliar academic evaluation methods, confirming that the model is both theoretically and methodologically feasible in understanding how South and East Asian students perceive and respond to academic evaluation practices in Finnish universities. Each factor in the model is explained in detail in the subsequent paragraphs.

Presage factors refer to elements that precede the learning process, including both student-related characteristics and contextual factors within the teaching environment. Student characteristics encompass prior knowledge, abilities, cultural background, and preferred learning strategies. Teaching context includes academic evaluation methods, course workload, instructional strategies, and curriculum content. These factors jointly influence how students interpret and engage with their current learning experiences. In addition to that, Process factors describe the approaches students adopt in response to the learning environment shaped by presage conditions. Biggs (1989) identifies three primary learning approaches: surface, deep, and achieving. A surface approach is typically characterized by rote memorization and minimal engagement with the content, often resulting from perceived difficulty in course content or assessment methods. This approach is frequently linked with fear of failure and heightened academic anxiety (Biggs, 1989). In contrast, a deep approach involves intrinsic motivation, active engagement, and a desire to understand the material, reflecting meaningful learning. The achieving or strategic approach is adopted by students who are goal-oriented and focus on maximizing performance outcomes (Biggs, 1989). Several studies have highlighted the connection between presage and process factors, for instance, it was speculated that heavy academic workload and misaligned academic evaluation methods resulted in students adopting surface approaches to study, whereas, students with perceived positive experiences with the learning environment adopted deep approaches towards learning resulting in better learning outcomes (Lizzio et al., 2002).

Consequently, Product stage refers to the learning outcomes that emerge as a result of the interaction between presage and process factors. Biggs categorized learning outcomes into four dimensions: quantitative, referring to the amount of content learned; qualitative, reflecting the depth and quality of understanding; institutional, encompassing grades, credentials, and formal recognition of achievement; and affective, which relates to the learner's emotional responses, such as satisfaction and confidence in the learning experience (Biggs, 1989). These outcomes may include academic achievement, development of subject-specific and transferable skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities. While the 3P model offers a theoretically coherent framework for understanding student learning, its empirical application, particularly in cross-cultural higher education contexts,

remains limited (Haverila, 2012). In other words, there is insufficient research on the Asian student's academic experiences in European universities and their perception of the attainment of the learning outcomes. The present study contributes to addressing that gap by integrating the model to explore the academic experiences of Asian students in Finnish universities.

### **3.1 Adoption and development of the 3P Model in the current study: Positioning evaluative anxiety as a product in Biggs' 3P model**

The presage-Process-Product model by Briggs' (1989), offers a practical framework for comprehending the complex interactions between learner characteristics, instructional contexts, learning processes and the learning outcomes. In this study, the 3P model offers an explanation on how Asian students in Finnish higher education perceive academic evaluation practices and experience evaluative anxiety. Not only that, Biggs' 3P model has been used as a widely accepted framework in educational research to analyse student learning through the interplay of learner characteristics, learning approaches, and outcomes (Biggs 2014). On a traditional point of view or as suggested by the model by Biggs' (1989), the product stage of the model consists measurable outcomes such as academic performance, academic satisfaction and affective experiences like emotional wellbeing. Several studies that utilized Biggs' 3P model has not directly looked at evaluative anxiety but has framed the model in their studies on affective outcomes such as test anxiety and academic anxiety. For instance, a study that integrated Biggs' 3P Model along with the self-determination theory to examine how misperceptions that start in the presage phase may affect basic psychological needs, resulting in high test anxiety and academic performance, illustrated on how anxiety influence the learning process (Fraidan, 2024). In a similar manner, Bigdeli (2010) discusses the role anxiety plays in adult learning, emphasizing the instructors to address both psychological and physiological aspects of anxiety in order improve learning outcomes (Bigdeli, 2010).

In the current study, evaluative anxiety is considered an outcome of the learning process, as depicted in Figure 2, and therefore is proposed as an extension for the model by incorporating evaluative anxiety as an emotional product of the learning process. Given the emotional demands of academic evaluation methods and academic pressures that may arise in a unfamiliar learning environment, positioning of evaluative anxiety as an outcome influenced by both presage and process variables is justified. This positioning of evaluative anxiety in the model opens academic doors to examine how anxiety impacts performance, feedback loops and also on how students adapt to their academic evaluation methods and what learning strategies they implement in doing so.

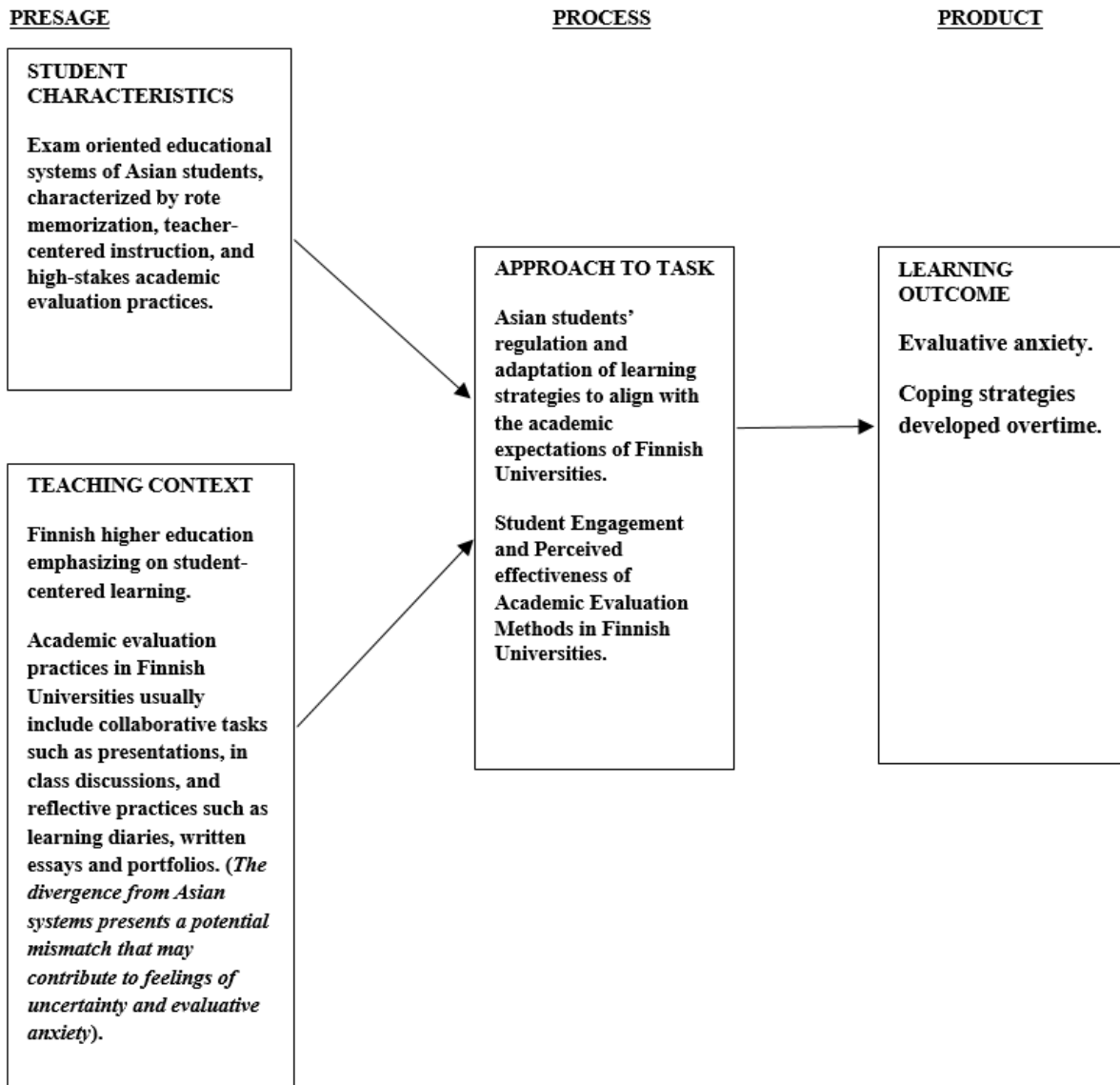


Figure 2: Adoption of the 3P model (Briggs' 1989) in the current study (Author, 2025)

### 3.1.1. Presage factors

The presage phase in Briggs' 3P model encompasses both student characteristics and the teaching context (Biggs, 1989). In the current study, *student characteristics* include their cultural background, prior educational experiences, and perception of what academic evaluation practices are. Asian students, specifically, those from south and East Asia, start their education in Finnish universities with prior academic experiences shaped by exam oriented, rigid curricular structures and teacher centered learning methods. Moreover, these systems emphasize rote learning and memorization which will be often tested using summative evaluation methods, with little room given for formative evaluation methods and learning collaboratively (Chung, 2019). On the other hand, the Finnish higher education system emphasizes student centered learning, promotes autonomy and emphasizes on critical thinking and problem solving skills (Nieminen et al., 2024). This difference between the two education systems

could influence how Asian students perceive academic success and failure and also their approach towards Finnish education system.

Furthermore, in terms of the *teaching context*, as depicted and explained by Briggs 3P model would refer to the diverse academic evaluation methods practiced in Finnish universities and the institutional and social support systems available for Asian students, (Pereira et al., 2016). These presage factors have been extensively supported in research and it is evident that international students may struggle to adapt to a new environment and to the universities' academic requirements (García et al., 2019). Therefore, understanding these factors are important as they explain on how differences in evaluation methods in different cultures would contribute to feelings of uncertainty and evaluative anxiety among international students.

### 3.1.2. Process factors

The process stage, as outlined by Biggs (1989), examines how students approach academic tasks and manage their learning. This stage is shaped by three key learning approaches: surface, deep, and achieving, each of which is influenced by presage factors such as students' prior experiences, cultural background, and motivation (Biggs, 1989). In the context of this study, process factors refer to how Asian students regulate and adapt their learning in response to academic evaluation methods in Finnish universities, and how they interpret the effectiveness and engage with these evaluation practices. Empirical evidence explains that students may initially employ a surface approach, which is characterized by rote memorization and minimal engagement with content due to uncertainty, anxiety, or confusion about academic expectations (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). This tendency is particularly likely when students are unfamiliar with assessment criteria or when expectations are not clearly communicated.

Conversely, when teaching methods and evaluation strategies are consistent with the intended learning objectives, students may adopt a deep learning approach, critically engaging with content and reflecting on their understanding (Biggs, 2014). This transition from surface to deep learning is often facilitated by clear instructions, meaningful learning materials, and manageable workloads (Biggs, 1989). In addition to learning approaches, metacognition and self-regulation play critical roles in the process stage. Metacognition involves an individual's awareness and understanding of their own cognitive processes, while self-regulation refers to the capacity to control one's own cognitive, emotional and behavioural (Zimmerman, 2002). These skills are essential for effective academic performance, especially in unfamiliar or demanding learning environments. Students who lack experience with reflective or formative assessment methods may struggle to monitor their own progress, which can lead to evaluative anxiety and hinder both metacognitive engagement and academic success. Given that many Asian students come from teacher-centered educational systems,

they may initially adopt a surface approach but gradually shift toward deeper learning strategies as they become more accustomed to the expectations and pedagogical practices of Finnish higher education (Biggs, 2014). Zimmerman (2002) further notes that students can develop their own metacognitive strategies over time, such as customizing study techniques or seeking academic support. Therefore, by analysing students' metacognitive behaviours and emotional responses to assessment through the lens of the 3P model, this study can identify key areas for educational intervention, such as enhanced feedback mechanisms, mentorship, or orientation programs to support a smoother academic transition and foster deeper learning among international students.

The association between presage and process stages have been studied extensively in research, this is evident in a study done by Lizzio et al. (2002), which used prior academic achievement, work load and teaching styles as presage factors revealed that overwhelming workload and ineffective academic evaluation methods caused students to adopt surface approaches to study as majority of the academic evaluation methods were assessed primarily through rote learning rather than assessing critical thinking or conceptual knowledge. Moreover, the study also found that the students with a positive perception of their learning environment tended to engage in deeper learning methods. This study by Lizzio et al. (2002) clearly explain the process factors by distinguishing the manner in which students involve with their learning (Lizzio et al., 2002). Similarly, Shum et al. (2021) also reported that students who adopted deep learning strategies such as critical analysis, integration of ideas and intrinsic motivation were more likely to achieve better learning outcomes, given that the academic evaluation methods focused on understanding rather than surface level recall (Shum et al., 2022).

In a similar manner, a research by Platow et al. (2013), reported that students with a positive self-concept and a sense of belonging in their academic field were more likely to adopt a deep approach to learning, and attempted to understand the content learnt and relate them to prior knowledge, whereas, students who felt less connected with their academic disciplines often opted for surface approaches such as memorization. The study also identified that educational environment, academic evaluation methods and teaching styles played a major role in strengthening or weakening the approaches adopted by the students, highlighting the dynamic interaction between student characteristics (presage factors) and learning approaches (process factors) (Platow et al., 2013). This dichotomy between the presage and process factors has important implications for international students transitioning from predominantly exam-oriented systems to environments, such as Finnish higher education, that encourage active learning and deep approaches through evaluations like presentations, reflective diaries, and group discussions. In this context, students who are accustomed to surface learning may initially experience increased evaluative anxiety when encountering unfamiliar assessment methods that demand deeper engagement with content.

### 3.1.3. Product factors

The product stage as outlined by Biggs (1989), examines the learning outcomes students achieve as an outcome of their learning. In the present study, the product factors include, self-reported levels of evaluative anxiety and coping strategies developed overtime. As suggested by previous research, it is evidently clear that international students' success at the university is not only shaped by academic performance but also by their emotional well-being and their perceived effectiveness and transparency of evaluation practices at the university.

The connection between product and process factors are often studied together, as one stage causes the results in the other. For instance, Heikkilä and Lonka (2006) in their study on "*Studying in higher education: students' approaches to learning, self-regulation, and cognitive strategies*" conducted at the University of Helsinki revealed that deep learning approaches such as intrinsic motivation, critical thinking, and conceptual understanding were strongly associated with positive self-regulation techniques such as setting goals, managing time effectively and adapting new study technique to fulfil academic evaluation requirements effectively. The study also found that deep learners frequently used elaborative cognitive strategies such as summarizing, generating questions and drawing concept maps to facilitate their own understanding of the concept learnt (Heikkilä & Lonka, 2006). Similarly, Clinton (2014) also indicated that students involved in deep learning approaches such as meaningful engagement and critical thinking showed increased academic performance and engagement in their studies (Clinton, 2014).

With reference to this study, studies have indicated that when students view academic evaluations to be meaningful, transparent and fair they adopt deep learning approaches and engage positively with their studies, for instance, a study done by Kangaslampi et al. (2022) on students at the university of Alto Finland, found that student centered evaluation methods such as reflective writing, peer feedback and class presentations enhanced intrinsic motivation and supported higher order thinking skills (Kangaslampi et al., 2022). In addition to this, Entwistle and Ramsden (2015), have also reported similar findings where they highlighted that students who view their evaluation methods to be fair, meaningful and encouraging, are more inclined to engage in deep learning strategies and contrastively, if they perceive the evaluation methods to be unfair and concentrated on rote learning and never develop critical thinking skills (Entwistle & Ramsden, 2015). Thus, it could be speculated that perception of evaluation methods play a significant role for Asian students in Finland, as many Asian students come from evaluation systems that are heavily reliant on exam oriented systems.

Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that transitioning from an exam oriented evaluation system into a formative evaluative system could lead to heightened evaluative anxiety, specifically if

the evaluation methods seems extremely unfamiliar and difficult to comprehend (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). It was also reported that, perceived differences in evaluation methods may result in academic stress and anxiety specially for students transitioning from an Asian education context to a European or western context (Straker, 2020). These findings indicate that evaluative anxiety is a product factor and highlights that student emotions are important to be considered. Similarly, coping strategies are also to be discussed as they help students to adapt to changing academic environments and develop ways to cope with evaluative anxiety. Heikkilä and Lonka (2006) reported that self-regulated learners with positive attitude towards academic evaluations were inclined to adopt coping mechanisms such as time management and goal setting to settle the impact of evaluative stress (Heikkilä & Lonka, 2006).

To add to this, Rienties et al. (2012) in their study on understanding academic performance of international students studying across five Dutch business schools, revealed that international students faced significant stress as they adjusted to both the culture and the evaluation methods of the university. The study also indicated that social support from peers, instructors and proper access to academic support and resources helped the international students to adjust more effectively (Rienties et al., 2012). Having said that, the presence of such strategies as a product outcome may facilitate the understanding of student resilience, adaptation, and long-term success within the Finnish higher education system.

### **3.2 Findings from empirical studies grounded in the theoretical framework**

A number of research studies have applied Biggs' 3P model to examine the outcomes of learning and academic experiences in higher education, with a considerable number of studies focusing on international students. As the model is particularly relevant for cross cultural research, it provides a conceptual understanding of the influence of prior academic experiences and contextual factors on student's affective and cognitive learning (Biggs, 1989).

One relevant study that utilised 3P model was Haverila's (2012) study conducted at TAMK University of Applied Sciences in Finland to examine the effect of e-learning experiences (presage factor) on students' perception of learning. The study indicated that process variables such as motivation and collaboration have a mediating role that affects the product factor which is the effectiveness of e-learning measured by amount of learning or how well the content was learned. While this study focuses on undergraduate students in International Business programs, the underlying findings on how motivation and peer engagement affect students' academic experiences are relevant to the current study. Many Asian students in Finnish higher education come from teacher centered education background with little exposure and experience on student centered evaluation methods. This can sometimes negatively influence students' perception of evaluation practices and sometimes

result in evaluative anxiety and depending on the motivation towards learning and social support systems available anxiety or academic stress can be controlled. Haverila highlights that encouraging collaboration and supporting motivation are key to improving both learning and emotional well-being for international students (Haverila, 2012).

Similarly, Hirano's (2021) thesis also used the Biggs' 3P model along with Tinto's student integration theory as the analytical framework in his study to examine "*East Asian Students' Social and Academic Integration and their Satisfaction with Learning Outcomes at Norwegian Higher Education Institutions*" with process factors being students' personal characteristics and teaching environment, and process factors being student and institutional commitment and finally, product factors being integration and students satisfaction with their learning (Hirano, 2021). The study found that students' academic engagement and approach to learning were strongly related with their sense of belonging which impacted their integration to the academic and social environment. The study also reported that the academic workload and the teaching environment impacted satisfaction with the learning outcomes. The results from this study could be mirrored into the current study as Hirano's (2021) study indicated that when students experience difficulties with academic and social integration they may adopt surface level learning approaches or disengage emotionally, resulting in experiencing evaluative anxiety. Thus, Hirano's (2021) use of the 3P model helps trace these outcomes back to their social and academic contexts, offering a clear precedent for using the model in this study's analytical framework.

Additionally, Zhang (2000) examined the link between learning approaches and academic achievement among university students in Hong Kong and the United States, utilizing Biggs's 3P model as the theoretical framework and reported that students from Confucian heritage cultures or East Asian cultures tend to favour surface or achievement-oriented approaches, particularly when exposed to high-stakes evaluation systems. The study also indicated that, students performed better if they found the subjects to be relevant to their future careers and also the evaluation methods to be meaningful resulting in adopting deep learning approaches to engage with learning tasks (Zhang, 2000). These findings are essential to the present study, as they offer an explanatory framework as to why many Asian students in Finland may sometimes struggle with academic evaluation systems that are more reflection oriented. The study also suggests that even highly capable students may experience anxiety or underperform if their evaluation methods misaligned with learning outcomes. Zhang's research supports the idea that cultural background shapes not only how students learn but also how they respond emotionally to assessment, providing a link between the affective concept of learning and academic performance.

Having said that, the three studies explored above depicts how Asian international students perceive educational systems that are different from theirs. Although different from the current study that seeks to comprehend the differences in academic evaluation methods between Asian and Finnish contexts, these studies collectively highlight the influence of factors such as culture, motivation, academic and social integration and learning approaches in shaping students' academic experiences and defines the model in a way that indicates the other factors behind Asian students academic challenges and achievements in foreign contexts. Nevertheless, these themes are somewhat related to the focus of the current study on evaluative anxiety and perception of academic evaluation methods of Asian students in Finnish higher education. Moreover, the current study contributes to the existing literature by investigating specifically on the manner which culturally diverse student population's such as south and East Asian students perceive the different academic evaluation practices and may experience evaluative anxiety in the Finnish context due to unfamiliarity of the work, which is an area that is underexplored in many studies that have used the 3P model by Briggs' (1989).

## 4 Overview of the methodological approach and research design

This chapter outlines the methodological approach that is utilised to explore on how Asian students in Finnish higher education perceive academic evaluation practices and experience evaluative anxiety. The study adopts a convergent parallel mixed methods design as theorized by Creswell and Creswell (2018), enabling the combination of both qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative and qualitative questions were created to align with the theoretical framework of the study, which is Biggs' (1989) 3P model, which clearly elaborates the variables under study. The justification for using a convergent parallel mixed methods approach stems from the presence of the multidimensional nature of evaluative anxiety, which cannot be fully comprehended through quantitative or qualitative alone. In other words, evaluative anxiety could involve several layers, such as emotions, personal experiences, which could be explained qualitatively, frequency of experiencing it, which could be measured quantitatively, and finally how these are influenced by cultural differences, education background and learning environment, thus, calling for a mixed method research, which would then triangulate both the qualitative and quantitative data to obtain insightful findings (Greene, 2006).

Several studies that investigated on evaluative anxiety has demonstrated the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative data on understanding complex psychological phenomena like evaluative anxiety (Todd et al., 2019) cited in (Yan et al., 2025). Although there has been previous research that has explored academic stress and cultural adjustment among international students, there remains a lack of focused inquiry into how evaluation practices employed in Finnish Universities would impact students from diverse Asian educational backgrounds. By integrating both statistical analysis and content analysis, this findings of this study would contribute to the existing literature by enhancing the understanding of culturally responsive evaluation practices.

### 4.1 Research Questions and Objectives

In conjunction with the aim of the current research study, the research questions and the hypothesis guiding the study are stated below. As this study employs a mixed methods design the research questions will be explored and analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

#### Research questions

- I. What are the key differences in academic evaluation practices between Asian higher education systems and Finnish higher education as perceived by the Asian International students in the Finnish Universities?

- II. How are the academic evaluation practices in Finnish higher education related to the Evaluative anxiety among Asian students, compared to their prior experiences in Asian exam-focused education systems?
- III. How do Asian students in Finland adapt to unfamiliar academic evaluation practices, and what coping strategies do they describe using?

### **Hypotheses to be analysed quantitatively**

H1: There are differences in how academic evaluation practices are perceived by Asian students in Finnish universities compared to their home countries.

H2: There is a relationship between perceived effectiveness of academic evaluation methods used in Finnish universities and evaluative anxiety experienced by Asian students.

H3: Asian students utilize various coping strategies to manage evaluative anxiety in Finnish higher education.

### **4.2 Linking research questions and hypotheses and mapping the research questions to the 3P model by Briggs**

In alignment with the study aims and utilization of a mixed methods design, the research questions were first formulated to guide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Moreover, to allow for quantitative analysis, some of these research questions were further developed into testable hypotheses. Notably, the research questions guided both the qualitative and the quantitative components and the hypotheses were specifically designed to be tested through statistical analysis of the quantitative data. Considering this, the research questions of the current research can be linked with the Biggs' 3P model as indicated below,

- RQ1 (Academic evaluation differences) corresponds with the Presage stage by comparing prior and current academic contexts.
- RQ2 (Academic evaluation practices and evaluative anxiety) links with the Process stage, exploring emotional responses to new assessment formats.
- RQ3 (Adaptation and coping) aligns with the Product stage, focusing on coping mechanisms and adjustment outcomes.

### 4.3 Participants and the research Instruments utilized in the study

The participants in this study were 45 international students from East and South Asian countries, all of whom were enrolled in English-taught Master's degree programs at Finnish universities. The sample specifically included students from India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, China, Japan, and South Korea, as these countries represent educational systems that are traditionally teacher-centered and exam-oriented. These systems often differ significantly from the student-centered and diverse academic evaluation practices commonly used in Finnish higher education.

The data for this study were collected using a self-designed online questionnaire (Appendix 2), and the questionnaire used in this study was developed in accordance with Biggs' 3P Model of Teaching and Learning (Biggs, 1989), and also the model provided a structured lens to create the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, in line with the convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The questionnaire consisted of four sections, each section with its link to the model is described below:

1. Section 1 (Demographic Information): This section gathered data on students' academic field, nationality and length of stay in Finland. This section is directly linked to the presage factors of the 3P model which looks at learner's background characteristics and learning context. These factors are essential for understanding how students' prior educational experiences shape their expectations and responses to academic evaluation practices.
2. Section 2 (Academic Evaluation practices): This section explored the frequency and the perceived effectiveness of various academic evaluation methods used in Finnish Higher education using both 7 Likert scale and 4 open ended questions. Likert scale items were used to quantify the frequency of the evaluation methods used in their courses. Frequency of evaluation methods had 6 items and was measured on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Never, 2 = rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always. Some items from the Likert scale include, In-class discussions/active participation, Group presentations, Individual presentations, Video presentations, etc. The reliability of the scale was checked by calculating the Cronbach's alpha value, and the value obtained was 0.60.

Similarly, the perceived effectiveness of the evaluation methods was measured on a 5 item Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where, 1 = Does not help at all, 2 = Helps a little, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Helps somewhat, 5 = Helps a lot. The scale had 4 items, and some of the items from the Likert

scale include, “In class discussions support my learning, Presentations (individual/group/video) enhance my understanding, Learning Diaries contribute to my academic progress, etc.” The reliability of the scale was checked via the Cronbach's alpha value and it was calculated to be 0.51.

3. Section 3: (Evaluative Anxiety Levels): Items for measuring the levels of evaluative Anxiety was adapted from the 11 item Academic Anxiety scale by Cassady (2020), using a four point Likert scale ranging from 1= Not at all typical of me to 4= Very typical of me. Some of the items from the scale include, “I worry that my best is not as good as expected in my Finnish university, I tend to put off doing university work because it stresses me, I often worry that I am not doing assignments properly, etc.”. Additionally, two opened questions were also incorporated to understand how students perceived evaluative anxiety. This scale was designed to measure the frequency and intensity of anxiety symptoms experienced in academic settings, capturing both emotional reactions such as worry, fear, nervousness and cognitive responses such as negative self-evaluation, concern over performance ( Cassady et al., 2019) . The Academic Anxiety scale is well regarded for its reliability and has been used in several educational studies to explore how anxiety impacts academic performance and motivation. The reliability of the scale was checked with the Cronbach's alpha values and the scale showed a value of  $\alpha=0.80$ .
4. Section 4: (Coping strategies and support systems): This section also included both likert scale and one open ended questions to explore student personal and institutional coping mechanisms.<sup>7</sup> Likert scale questions measured levels of agreement with various support strategies, and open ended responses allowed participants to share other strategies they have adopted over overtime to deal with the academic demands. The scale items were measured on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 = Not at all typical of me, 2 = somewhat typical of me, 3 = Quite typical of me, 4 = Very typical of me. Some of the items from the likert scale include, “I have developed effective study techniques to manage academic demands in Finland, Engaging with peers helps me cope with academic stress, I seek support from family or friends to handle academic pressure, etc”. The reliability of the scale used for this study was calculated and the Cronbach's alpha value was calculated to be  $\alpha =0.70$ .

#### **4.4 Data collection and research procedure**

The data was collected through an online survey (see Appendix 2) created using Webropol, a secure platform commonly used for academic research. The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. It began with an informed consent form and a brief description of the study, clearly outlining the inclusion criteria for participation. Only participants who met the criteria, which is, international Master’s students from East and South Asian countries studying in Finland were allowed to proceed with the survey.

The questionnaire also included a privacy notice (Appendix 3), informing participants about how their data would be stored, protected, and used, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. Through this process, participants were thoroughly informed about the purpose of the study, and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and data protection in line with ethical research standards. Moreover, as the survey was created using Webropol all the information collected were anonymous ensuring that no personal information was collected and thus further sustaining the ethical considerations. The survey was first distributed via email to program coordinators of international Master's degree programs at the University of Turku, who were asked to email the link to the students. To increase the response rate and enhance the representativeness of the sample, the survey was also shared with coordinators and academic networks across several other Finnish universities.

#### **4.5 Methods of data analysis**

With the convergent parallel mixed methods design incorporated, the data collected from 45 South and East Asian Master's degree students enrolled in Finnish Universities through the online survey was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively to understand the perception of academic evaluation methods, experiences of evaluative anxiety and coping strategies employed.

##### **4.3.1. Quantitative data analysis**

Quantitative data were gathered through structured items measured on Likert-type scales across three dimensions, which included, frequency and perceived effectiveness of evaluation methods, academic anxiety levels, and coping strategies. Prior to conducting hypothesis testing, the data set was screened for missing values, normality and outliers (Appendix 5). Before running the statistics, reliability or the internal consistency of the scales measuring the variables were calculated using Cronbach's alpha values. The statistical methods were chosen based on the structure of the items in the variables and the hypotheses being tested. Paired samples t-test was selected to test Hypothesis 1, the reason is that it is the most appropriate statistical method for comparing the means of two related groups, specifically when measuring the same participants' responses on two different variables. In this case, the paired samples t-test is used to compare the frequency of evaluation methods with the perceived effectiveness of these methods within the same group of Asian students in Finnish universities. According to (Field, 2013), the paired samples t-test is commonly used for within-subjects designs where the same participants provide data for two related conditions, making it an ideal method for this study.

To test Hypothesis two, (H2), a Pearson correlation analysis was used, allowing to explore the relationship between academic evaluation practices and reported levels of evaluative anxiety. This test was suitable because both variables were measured on continuous Likert-type scales, and the goal was to assess the strength and direction of their linear relationship. Pearson's  $r$  is widely accepted for examining such associations when the data meet assumptions of linearity and normality (Field, 2018). To test Hypothesis three (H3), multiple linear regression analysis was utilised to evaluate the predictive role of support systems and coping strategies on anxiety levels. This method is particularly effective for understanding the relative influence of multiple independent variables on a dependent outcome in small- to medium-sized samples (Field, 2013).

#### 4.3.2. Reliability of the scales

The reliability for the scales used in this study was calculated to measure the internal consistency of the scale items measuring the constructs. According to Tavakol & Dennick (2011)  $\alpha \geq 0.7$  is generally considered acceptable reliability and thus can be used with confidence in most research fields,  $\alpha \geq 0.8$  is considered a Good reliability,  $\alpha \geq 0.9$  is considered to be excellent reliability, and any value less than 0.7 is of low reliability and requires explanation as to why it is low. In this study, reliability was checked and the Cronbach's alpha values obtained for the section 2 scales, that is, *Frequency of the evaluation methods* and *Perceived effectiveness of the evaluation methods* fell between 0.6 and 0.51, where both scales indicate low reliability. There could be few reasons for the low value in reliability, first there were less items in both scales and one item, "*Frequency of exams*" and "*Perceived effectiveness of exams*" from each scale was removed to increase the Cronbach's alpha values (Appendix 5), which would then cause lower alpha values, thus it is common for alpha values to fall within low ranges and still be deemed reliable (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Secondly, as this study revolves around the field of Education, reliability expectations are somewhat more flexible, especially for scales that were newly developed by the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, the reliability for the scales that measured *Evaluative anxiety* and *coping strategies* were calculated to be 0.8 (Good reliability) and 0.70 (Acceptable reliability).

#### 4.3.3. Qualitative data analysis

Directed concept driven content- deductive analysis approach was adopted to analyse the qualitative responses. Moreover, this method was utilised due to the fact that the open ended questions used in the survey was created using the Biggs' 3P model and a coding scheme was already developed along with the themes and sub themes which were pre-defined before analysing the data by creating a coding scheme (Appendix 4). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), directed content analysis is most suitable when the researcher has a theoretical framework that guides the study, as it allows the researcher to test or expand existing theories within the new context, rather than relying on emergent

themes from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Furthermore, Elo & Kyngäs (2008) also explains that direct content analysis could be best used when the researcher already has an existing framework or a theory to shape the coding structure, which would then allow the researcher to refine or extend the concepts that are already established (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The three step process as suggested by Elo & Kyngäs (2008) was used to analyse the data. The first stage, which is the preparation stage involves getting familiarized with the data, to facilitate this, the responses from the open ended survey were read repeatedly to ensure familiarization with the content.

The second stage, which involves organizing, involved coding responses using the Nvivo 14 software via the use of a hierarchical coding scheme based on the coding scheme created by the researcher of the study in accordance with the Biggs 3P model. Within each of these categories, subthemes were developed to highlight specific recurring issues, and these subthemes were created in relation to the research questions that guided the data collection, therefore, the coding was conducted at the sub theme level, with each sub-theme representing a specific aspect of the broader main theme. Consequently, the final phase involved reporting the findings according to each category, supported by frequency counts and illustrative quotations to reflect both the prevalence and depth of student responses. The occurrence of responses relevant to the predetermined codes were counted and recoded using Nvivo14. These frequencies highlighted the significance of certain issues participants considered to have placed an importance on. However, as qualitative data seeks interpretive knowledge, these frequencies were used to comprehend the factors the respondents have placed an emphasis on and is discussed in the discussion chapter. Overall, the deductive nature of this analysis ensured that data were structurally and systematically organized and directly mapped onto the study's theoretical framework, while still allowing flexibility for emergent subcategories, offering a credible interpretation of student perspectives.

#### 4.3.4. Development of the coding scheme

The coding scheme (Appendix 4) development was guided using a deductive content analysis approach and was based on the Biggs' (1993) 3P Model of teaching and learning, which includes the dimensions of Presage, Process, and Product. These three components provided a theory-driven framework to structure the content analysis of students' open-ended survey responses. When the themes and sub themes were created they were linked to specific open-ended questions in the survey and mapped directly to the corresponding research questions. It is significant to note that the creation of subthemes helped capture more detailed and clearer interpretations, as suggested by Graneheim and Lundman (2004), who recommended using hierarchical coding in content analysis to combine theory-based thinking with new ideas that emerge from the data (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Consequently, coding was conducted systematically in Nvivo14 software, ensuring that each would be traceable and aligned with the conceptual alignment of the 3P model (Biggs, 1989). This approach

allowed for a structured, theory-informed interpretation of the data while also permitting the emergence of student experiences if it was present in the data.

Under the Presage category, four major themes were created to reflect the student's former or prior educational backgrounds in their home countries, however, these were explored by simplifying it into sub themes, and each sub theme elaborated the main themes to provide insightful qualitative data. Moreover, each of these themes and sub themes gave qualitative insights about research question one and also two. The theme *Prior Academic Experience in the Home Country* encompassed sub-themes such as *academic or exam pressure, exam-centric educational cultures, limited exposure to formative assessments, minimal group work, rote memorization, and teacher-centered instruction*. These codes were designed to capture participants' descriptions of the academic environments they were accustomed to. The next sub theme, *Cultural Academic Mismatch* included expressions of confusion or *discomfort resulting from adapting to unfamiliar academic expectations*, and other expressions such as *independent learning or group-based tasks*. Additionally, the theme *Perceived Fairness of Evaluation Methods* focused on students' perceptions of *grading clarity, feedback quality*. When the responses were read further, there were responses that compared fairness in academic evaluation methods between their home country and Finland, and thus a new sub theme was generated, titled, "*perception of fairness of evaluation methods in the Finnish education systems*".

Same procedure was followed with the Process and product stage and no new themes emerged under these two categories. The coding of these two factors allowed the researcher to obtain insightful qualitative data to answer the research question two and three. Consequently, a total of 495 codes were identified from the data.

#### 4.3.5. Ensuring the credibility and reliability of the qualitative data

Credibility and reliability of the qualitative research involves examining credibility, conformability and transferability (Elo et al., 2014) thus to ensure the credibility and reliability of the qualitative analysis of the current study, several strategies were applied throughout the analysis process. First the utilization of a theory-driven coding framework, based on Biggs' 3P Model, provided a clear analytical structure and improved the consistency of the interpretation of the data obtained from the responses. Secondly, the credibility of the data was enhanced using several methods. First a predetermined coding scheme was created utilizing Biggs' 3P model and this provided a structured framework for coding, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in established educational theory. Secondly, the open ended questions were directly mapped to the 3P Model during the creation of the coding scheme, which ensured that the interpretation of the findings was grounded in the research questions and the theoretical framework. Thirdly, the coding was done using the Nvivo14 software and this allowed structured and systematic coding, as it was possible to obtain accurate reports after

the coding has been completed. Research on credibility has indicated that theory guided coding enhance credibility by aligning data interpretation with established conceptual frameworks (Elo et al., 2014).

Similarly, the dependability of the data refers to the stability and consistency of the data overtime, and the coding of the data according to the Biggs' 3P Model (1989) ensures consistency of the analysis. In support of this statement, a study done by Korstjens and Moser (2018) theorized that documenting the coding process in qualitative software like Nvivo 14 increases the transparency and replicability of the whole analysis (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Not only that, the use of a survey to collect qualitative responses ensured that the survey contained identical questions across participants, thus further stabilizing data collection process and improving reliability. Additionally, the conformability or the objectivity of the data was ensured by adhering to the theoretical framework and coding scheme and reduced the subjective opinion and ensured that the coding decisions were solely based on the participants' responses rather than the researcher's interpretations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Consequently, transferability, which refers to the extent to which the finding from the current study could be applied or generalized to other contexts was ensured by providing descriptive information of the participants' and the context of study and the use of the pre-defined coding scheme also enhance the transferability of the data.

#### **4.6 Limitations of the study**

Although this research yields insightful perspectives into Asian Students' perception of academic evaluation methods and the link to evaluative anxiety in Finnish Universities, it is not without limitations that should be addressed so that the contextualization of the findings and improving the validity and reliability of the research could be improved. Having mentioned that, the first limitation is the sample size and the difficulty of generalizability, in other words, the current study consisted of 45 International South and East Asian Master's students currently enrolled in Finnish universities, which was sufficient for quantitative and qualitative content analysis, however, it does not allow for broad cultural generalisations of broader population of other international students from other regions. The second constraint of the study is the sampling method and the fact that the participants who participated in the study were from voluntary survey responses, which may have introduce self-selection bias, in other words those who have participated may already have a strong opinion and are comfortable disclosing their insights which could skew the results both quantitatively and qualitatively (Sedgwick, 2013).

Along with the self-selection bias there is the limitation of relying on self-reporting data, that is, as the study collected data that relied on self-reported perceptions, these responses are subjected to subjectivity and social desirability bias or answering in socially desirable manner, which may further skew results. Another limitation was the fact that the data was coded and analysed by a single researcher, although the coding was guided by a theory driven framework the absence of an intercoder may reduce the reliability of the interpretation of the findings (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). And the final limitation observed is that the data was collected via a cross sectional design limiting the ability to assess changes in students' perceptions or anxiety levels over the course of their studies, a longitudinal studies could have provided deeper insights (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

## 5 Analysis and findings of the study

This chapter depicts the findings obtained from the data that was gathered from the online survey. A convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed to analyse the data collected from 45 South and East Asian Master's students enrolled in Finnish universities allowing a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of academic evaluation practices, experiences of evaluative anxiety, and coping strategies within the Finnish higher education context. This chapter is divided into two main sections, the first section presents the quantitative findings, which describes the descriptive and inferential statistics, that included descriptive statistics of the demographic data, paired samples t-tests, Pearson correlations, and multiple linear regression tested through SPSS software. The next section presents the qualitative findings, derived through deductive content analysis based on Biggs' 3P Model (1989) and supported by representative quotations from participants.

The descriptive statistics were first run to examine the Field of study and duration of stay in Finland as reported by the respondents, the bar graphs below depicts the percentages of the aforementioned variables.

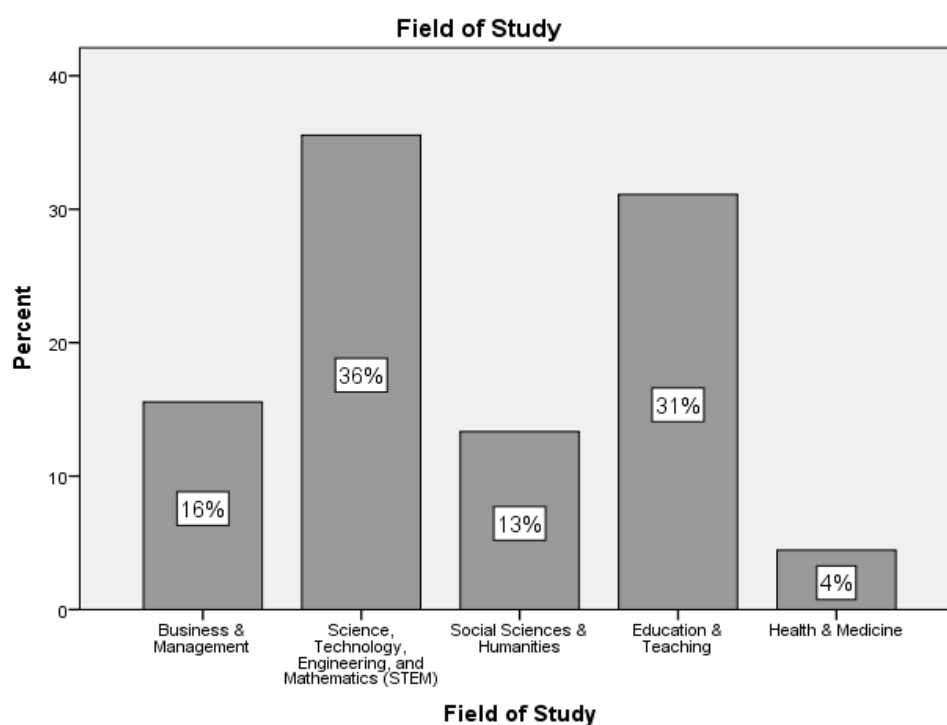


Figure 5a. Percentages of the students studying in different fields

As indicated in Figure 5a, majority of the students who took part in the survey was from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) with a percentage of 36%, followed by Education and Teaching majors with a percentage of 31%. 16% of the respondents were from the Business and management fields and 13% from Social Sciences and humanities. Lowest was from Health and Medicine with a percentage of 4%

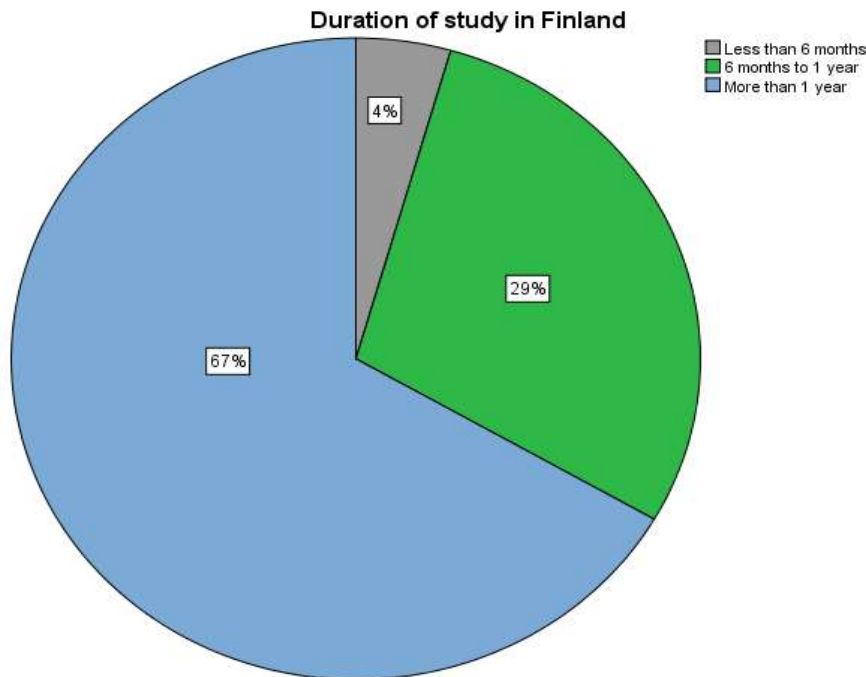


Figure 5b. Duration of respondents' studies in Finland

As shown in Figure 5b, the majority of the respondents (67%) reported studying in Finland for more than one year. This was followed by 29% who had been in the country for a duration of 6 months to 1 year. Only a small percentage (4%) indicated that their study period in Finland was less than 6 months.

## 5.1 Hypothesis Testing

The three hypotheses stated at the beginning of this research were tested to examine the presence of a possible link between academic evaluation methods, evaluative anxiety and coping strategies of international students' studying in Finnish universities. The analysis of each hypothesis is presented systematically below.

### 5.1.1. Perceived differences in academic evaluation practices

H1 states: There are differences in how academic evaluation practices are perceived by Asian students in Finnish universities compared to their home countries.

A paired samples t-test was run to examine the difference between the frequency of evaluation methods used and their perceived effectiveness among Asian students in Finnish higher education. Prior to analysis, assumptions that should be examined such as normality tests and the absence of significant outliers were tested and met by checking the histograms with normality plots and boxplots (Talikan et al., 2024). The paired samples test results (Appendix 6) indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the frequency with which evaluation methods were used (M

= 19.70, SD = 2.90) and students' perceived effectiveness of these methods ( $M = 15.90$ ,  $SD = 2.50$ ),  $t(44) = 6.90$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [2.66, 4.85]. The mean difference was 3.76, and the frequency score is higher than the effectiveness score, which suggests that students perceive evaluation methods to be used significantly more frequently than they find them effective, suggesting a gap between implementation and perceived usefulness of these methods in Finnish higher education.

### 5.1.2. Perceived evaluation effectiveness and its relationship to evaluative anxiety

H2 states: There is a relationship between perceived effectiveness of academic evaluation methods used in Finnish universities and evaluative anxiety experienced by Asian students.

To explore the connection between Asian students' perceived effectiveness of academic evaluation methods and their levels of evaluative anxiety in Finnish higher education, a Pearson correlation was conducted. Since the study attempts to examine a bidirectional association, a correlation was deemed the most ideal test. With the understanding that, correlation does not mean that there is a causation, it simply depicts if there is a relationship or not (Janse et al., 2021). Prior to the analysis, the assumptions of normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, as is it mandatory to have normality in both scales to measure the association between the constructs (Janse et al., 2021). The results showed that both perceived effectiveness ( $W = .951$ ,  $p = .054$ ) and evaluative anxiety ( $W = .956$ ,  $p = .089$ ) were normally distributed (Appendix 5), thus meeting the assumptions for parametric testing. The correlation analysis results (Appendix 6) revealed a statistically significant, moderate negative relationship between perceived effectiveness and evaluative anxiety,  $r(43) = -0.35$ ,  $p = .018$ , indicating that students who perceive evaluation methods (such as presentations, writing assignments, and learning diaries) as more effective are likely to experience lower levels of academic anxiety.

### 5.1.3. Coping Strategies for evaluative anxiety among Asian students in Finnish Higher Education

H3 states: Asian students utilize various coping strategies to manage evaluative anxiety in Finnish Higher education

To test the coping strategies used by Asian students in Finnish higher education and their relationship to evaluative anxiety, descriptive statistics were first calculated. These statistics provided an overview of the most commonly employed strategies and students' perceptions of their effectiveness as depicted in Table 5.1.3.

Table 5.1.3. Descriptive Statistics of Coping Strategies

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-Developed Study techniques to deal with Academic Demands	45	2	5	3.69	.633
Engaging with peers to cope with academic stress.	45	1	5	4.09	.821
Sufficient resources offered by Finnish Universities' s (eg, counseling, academic advisors) to help manage academic stress.	45	2	5	3.64	.957
Use of university-provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety.	45	1	5	2.67	1.108
Perceived support professors and instructors.	45	2	5	3.96	.767
Adaption to the Finnish academic evaluation methods	45	3	5	3.93	.688
Valid N (listwise)	45				

The analysis revealed that engaging with peers ( $M = 4.09$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) was the most frequently used coping strategy, with students strongly agreeing that peer support helps cope with academic stress. Similarly, students felt weakly to strongly supported by their professors ( $M = 3.96$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), and they reported adapting well to the Finnish academic evaluation system ( $M = 3.93$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ). In contrast, the use of university-provided services, such as mental health workshops and counselling, was the least utilized strategy ( $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), suggesting that students preferred more informal coping methods over university resources. Given these findings, a multiple linear regression was conducted to examine whether these coping strategies predicted levels of evaluative anxiety among the participants. The regression aimed to identify which strategies (self-developed study techniques, peer engagement, resources provided by the university, use of University resources, faculty support, Adaption to Finnish education) contributed to the variance in evaluative anxiety. Before running the

regression analysis, the assumptions of linearity, independence of residuals, homoscedasticity, and normality of residuals were checked and confirmed (Appendix 5).

The analysis proceeded to assess the significance and strength of the predictors in relation to evaluative anxiety and the model summary results, and it was indicated that the overall regression model was significant,  $F(6, 38) = 2.32$ ,  $p = 0.052$ , and explained approximately 27% of the variance in evaluative anxiety,  $R^2 = .27$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.15$ . This suggests that, collectively, the predictors accounted for a moderate proportion of variance in evaluative anxiety. The analysis then proceeded to examine the individual predictors that accounts for the variance as indicated in Table 5.1.5.

*Table 5.1.5 Individual predictors of evaluative anxiety*

Coefficients		Standardized				Collinearity Statistics		
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Coefficients		Tolerance	VIF	
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t			Sig.
1	(Constant)	33.495	5.501		6.089	.000		
	Self-Developed Study techniques to deal with Academic Demands	-2.392	1.280	-.313	-1.868	.069	.687	1.455
	Engaging with peers to cope with academic stress.	-.376	.865	-.064	-.435	.666	.896	1.116
	Sufficient resources offered by Finnish Universities (eg, counseling, academic advisors) to help manage academic stress.	-1.155	1.005	-.228	-1.150	.258	.489	2.047
	Use of university-provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety.	1.538	.734	.352	2.096	.043	.684	1.461
	Perceived support professors and instructors.	-1.503	1.252	-.238	-1.200	.237	.489	2.044

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Adaption to the Finnish academic evaluation methods	.517	1.385	.073	.373	.711	.498	2.007
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a. Dependent Variable: Evaluative Anxiety

As depicted in Table 5.1.5, Self-developed study techniques negatively predicted evaluative anxiety at a trend level ( $\beta = -.31$ ,  $p=0.06$ ). Use of university-provided resources to manage academic stress was a significant positive predictor. ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ). The other predictors, such as peer engagement, perceived availability of university resources, perceived professor support, and adaptation to evaluation methods, did not significantly predict evaluative anxiety ( $p > 0.05$ ). These results indicate that while the overall model approaches significance, only one variable (use of university-provided resources) significantly contributes to the prediction of evaluative anxiety. Interestingly, this variable's positive association with anxiety might suggest that students who experience more anxiety are more likely to seek institutional help, rather than the resources themselves increasing anxiety. Further possibilities will be discussed in the discussion section of the thesis.

## 5.2. Qualitative findings on student perceptions of evaluation practices and academic adaptation

This section presents the qualitative findings derived from open- ended survey responses, analysed via a deductive content analysis that is guided by Biggs' 3P Model of Teaching and Learning (1989). The steps suggested by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) on doing a deductive content analysis was implemented in the current study. A total of 495 codes were obtained from the data and frequencies of coded references are reported to indicate the relative prominence of each theme across the responses of 45 South and East Asian Master's students in Finnish higher education.

Furthermore, to support the interpretation of the qualitative findings, frequency counts were used to show how often particular themes and sub themes appeared across participants responses. While the main aim was to examine the students' experiences in depth, quantifying responses helped highlight which themes were most commonly shared. This approach aligns with the deductive content analysis method and complements the study's mixed methods design by combining the qualitative insights with patterns observed in the quantitative results.

### 5.2.1. Findings from presage factors: Student background and prior academic experiences

The Presage dimension focuses on students' previous educational backgrounds and experiences, and how these influence their perceptions of academic evaluation practices in Finland. As part of the analysis process, each main theme under the Presage category was further broken down into specific sub-themes to allow for a more detailed and insightful interpretation of the data. Coding was

conducted at the sub-theme level, with each sub-theme representing a specific aspect of the broader main theme. The results of this coding process are presented in Table 5.2.1, which summarizes the frequency of references under each sub-theme within the Presage dimension.

3P Model	Main Themes	Sub themes	References Frequencies
PRESAGE	Prior Academic Experience	Academic or exam pressure	19
		Exam-centric culture	45
		Lack of formative methods	26
		Lack of group work	22
		Rote memorization	6
		Teacher-centered approach	4
		<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>
	Cultural Academic Mismatch	Confusion about academic expectations	6
		Difficulty with independent learning	9
		Group work discomfort	17
		<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>
	Perceived fairness of evaluation methods	Feedback quality	6
		Satisfaction with grading and Evaluation methods	5
		overall perception about fairness of the evaluation methods	30
		<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

Table 5.2.1. Frequencies- Presage dimension

Prior Academic experience was the most frequently referenced within the presage category, with a total of 122 coded references. This highlights how previous exposure to exam focused, teacher centered instruction shaped their expectations of evaluation methods in Finnish Universities and also reflects the educational system in South and East Asia. Under this main theme, the most coded sub themes was “Exam-centric culture” with a total of 45 coded references. This was reflected in comments such as, “*My home country had lots of written examinations and they are very difficult*” (Respondent 1) and “*In my home country (s. Korea), written exams and written reports were the only way to be evaluated*”. (Respondent 31). A third respondent stated, “*In Japan, final exams carry significant weight, often determining a large portion of a student's grade*” (Respondent 33).

The next most coded sub theme under Prior academic experience was “Lack of formative methods” (26 coded references) and “Lack of group work” (22 coded references). These were reflected in comments such as: “*in Sri Lanka, very little attention or focus is given to group projects and especially peer feedback*” (Respondent 21) and “*In Nepal, collaborative learning like group projects and peer feedback isn't as heavily emphasized as it is in Finland*”. (Respondent 45). A third respondent expressed, “*In China, collaborative learning is not as common. Group projects are rare, and when they do happen, it's often more about dividing work rather than really collaborating*”(Respondent 40)

Similarly, the second main theme, cultural mismatch (32 references) captured challenges students faced adjusting to Finnish evaluation methods. Difficulties were reported particularly in group work settings (17 references), participants highlighted this experience in varying ways, saying: *“Sometimes it’s annoying when there is more group work in the Finnish University”* (Respondent 10), and *“I feel group works should be further monitored in order to confirm whether all the members are contributed equally. Because there are so many free riders”* (Participant 11)

Difficulty with independent learning (9 references) and unclear academic expectations (6 references) were the other coded references, these highlight the challenge in transitioning from a summative evaluation system to a formative evaluation system that emphasizes methods such as learning diaries, collaborative learning and in class discussions. Participants highlighted both these experiences, saying: *“Essays is also the same, we write about 10 pages and end up with a “2, or 3” which is not enough after the time and effort you have put in”* (Respondent 30). Another stated,

Here in Finland doing assignments require critical thinking. This was one of my main issues and the reason I was no able to get good mark in the beginning of my studies in Finland. In the home country we usually avoid challenging the result of the studies of prominent scholars, but here is different and you are expected to make your own point. (Respondent 8)

The third Presage theme, Perceived Fairness of Evaluation Methods (41 references), reflected students’ evaluations of the fairness and transparency of academic evaluation methods used in Finnish universities. While overall perceptions of fairness were the most common (30 references), comments also addressed grading satisfaction (5 references) and feedback quality (6 references). Participants shared their input on overall perception of fairness by giving reflections such as,

I feel that more than the methods, the fact that there is limited deadline pressure makes Finnish system more inclusive and fairer. If I am doing many courses at once, I can stagger my assessments so that I am not pressured into creating substandard outputs. Also the fact that I can improve my grade if I wish to, gives me flexibility that is not present in my home country. (Respondent 6)

In my home country we used to have 3 months to complete a trimester with max of 4 courses. We had to memorize a lot back then. But here in Finland within 1.5 months i can complete a course of 6 ECTS with group work/presentation, written assignments and finally a learning diary/reflective easy. Which is more of my understanding from the course and what I learned. Comparing both scenario, I find Finnish education is much easier than my home country. (Respondent 12)

### 5.2.2. Findings from process factors: Asian students' engagement, self-regulation, and perceptions of Finnish evaluation practices

The process dimension examines how students engage and adapt to the academic evaluation practices in their Finnish universities, which include the strategies the student use to adjust to the Finnish higher education context, their levels of engagement and their perception on the overall effectiveness of the evaluation methods established in the Finnish universities. As depicted in table 5.2.2, the main themes under the process category was divided into specific sub themes allowing for clearer differentiation of the students' experiences and perceptions. Coding was conducted at the sub theme level with each sub-theme reflecting a distinct facet of students' academic engagement and adjustment processes.

3P Model	Main Themes	Sub themes	References Frequencies
PROCESS	Regulation and Adaptation Strategies	Emotional Management	10
		Other methods of regulating	28
		Seeking Feedback	3
		Time Management	18
		<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>
	Student Engagement in the Finnish University	Class participation or Interaction in Group work	16
		<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>
	Perceived Effectiveness	Usefulness for skill building and Employment	41
		<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>
	Evaluation Methods and Preferences	Evaluation methods used in Finnish universities	45
		Flexibility with Evaluation methods	12
		Preference towards types of academic evaluation methods	25
		<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>

Table 5.2.2. Frequencies: Process Dimension

Evaluation Methods and Preferences was the most frequently mentioned process theme, with a total of 84 references. Students commented extensively on the types of evaluation used in Finland (45 references), with some students emphasizing the perception by commenting opinions such as, *“Learning diaries and reflective essays are the most common way of evaluation , while essays are also being an evaluation method quite often. But neither final exams nor mid exams are required for the evaluations”*. (Respondent 3) and *“in Finnish universities too, though there are more discussions, the main mode of teaching and learning are individual like essays, or learning diaries, and presentation and discussions generally drive the class forward”* . (Respondent 6). A third respondent also

expressed stating, *“Attending the presentation sessions or active participation of research seminars counts for evaluation. Sometimes peer evaluation is used.”* (Respondent 10).

Other sub themes included their preference towards academic methods (25 references), and the flexibility (12 references) of the academic evaluation methods. These were reflected from participants' when they stated comments such as, *“I would suggest project-based evaluation with real-world applications, such as case studies related to public health or healthcare systems”* (Respondent 36)

In Finland, students have the opportunity to retake exams up to three times and still receive full marks, which I think is one of the best aspects of the system. This gives students a chance to learn from their mistakes and improve. In my home country, although repeat exams are allowed, they only offer the possibility of passing the exam, which adds more pressure to perform well on the first attempt. This flexibility in Finland helps reduce stress and encourages a deeper understanding of the material. (Respondent 13)

The theme Regulation and Adaptation Strategies had a total of 59 references and showed a range of adjustment efforts, with emphasis on other regulation methods (28 references), time management (18 references), and emotional management (10 references). Seeking feedback was mentioned less often (3 references), possibly indicating hesitance in approaching instructors. Some statements on other regulation methods were reflected in comments such as: *“Not much, but techniques like mind mapping, group study, summarization of notes, not procrastinating”* (Respondent 32)

One technique I have tried is to start writing an essay as soon as the course starts. This way I can organize my thoughts and start planning to write without the added anxiety of approaching the end of the course. Also, I have started making comments on any article I read, so that I can come back for the important points later if I have to use in any essay or group presentation. (Respondent 6)

Time management and emotional management was reflected in comments such as: *“Time management, and planning ahead makes it easy, that means specially for learning diaries it's always good to start from the day one rather than waiting for the last moment”* (Respondent 3) and *“One is not to overthink, but to write whatever comes to mind at the first instance. Then, when we have a sketch, it's possible to edit and refine”* (Respondent 4)

Student Engagement (16 references) was coded when students described participation in discussions or group work. Though less frequent, it reflects meaningful interaction in the Finnish classroom context, some references stated by the respondents were, *here in Finland, smaller class sizes allow for more dynamic assessments like discussions, group work, and presentations, which makes the learning process more engaging and practical.”* (Respondent 44)

For instance, in one of my courses, we worked together on a software development project, and the feedback from peers was incredibly helpful. It wasn't just about completing the task; we had to discuss, critique, and learn from each other. This really made me appreciate how collaboration in real-world jobs works. (Respondent 39)

Additionally, the theme Perceived Effectiveness had a total of 41 references and it highlighted the positive views on the usefulness of current evaluation methods for skill development and employability. This was illustrated by a respondent who shared, *“I think group presentations help me improve my communication skills and prepare me to work with groups, which is often the case in professional setup”*. (Respondent 5)

### 5.2.3. Findings from product factors: Evaluative anxiety and coping mechanisms perceived by Asian students

The process dimension focuses on the outcomes of student learning experiences particularly in terms of evaluative anxiety, coping mechanisms and support systems the students rely on in their Finnish universities. To allow for clearer interpretation, each main theme was broken into sub-themes and coded accordingly. This helped highlight the different ways students manage academic stress and adapt to unfamiliar assessment methods. The frequency of coded responses under each sub-theme is summarized in Table 5.2.3.

Main Codes		Sub codes	References
3P Model			Frequencies
PRODUCT	Evaluative Anxiety	Fear of failure or Uncertainty	3
		Language barriers	1
		Performance pressure	17
		Unclear academic methods	13
		<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>
	Coping Mechanisms or strategies	Counselling services	1
		Peer and Teacher support	28
		<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>
	Change over time	Increased confidence	4
		Reduced anxiety	19
		Shifted evaluation preferences	14
		<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

Table 5.2.3. Frequencies: Product dimensions

Evaluative anxiety (34 references) and Change over time (37 references) were the most referenced sub theme under the product phase, followed by coping mechanisms with 29 references. The most recorded sub theme under evaluative anxiety was performance pressure (17 references) and unclear academic methods (13 references), with one person stating language barriers experienced during education. Some respondents highlighted performance pressure by stating statements such as,

I didn't feel much pressure in my country but it was because I didn't care my grade at that time. Now I feel a lot of pressure in Finland. That is because I want to get a good grade and graduate in 2 years due to a scholarship. I feel more pressure in Finland but that is caused by my differences of my personal situation. (Respondent 13)

as a neuroscience student in Finland, we have to use several software's for data analysis, i am not familiar with all of it, so it took a long time to study using it. Still more and more new updates keep on coming. I also noticed that the European students were familiar with most of the software although we have studied the same content in the bachelor's level. I think the lack of resources in Sri Lanka was a major reason for my unpreparedness. (Respondent 42)

Additionally, peer and teacher support was the most referenced sub theme under coping mechanisms with 29 references, and this was reflected in a participants who stated, *"In Finland academic pressure is very less. Because the teachers are also very friendly and approachable also the evaluation methods are fair"* (Respondent 10) and *"Well, I have two friends with whom I discuss whenever I have any doubts"* (Respondent 21).

Similarly, the most referenced sub themes under change over time was reduced anxiety experienced overtime (19 references) and students reporting of shifted perceptions about evaluation preferences (14 references). One respondent reflected on reduced anxiety by stating:

In Finland we can resubmit an assignment if we are not satisfied with a grade we received. For instance, I want to have either 4 or 5 grade for all my modules. If I receive a grade below 4 I can always request for a resubmission and there's a great possibility for me to improve my grade. So, I feel less anxious knowing that I can always go for a resubmission. In my country, we cannot resubmit. Once we receive a grade, it is final. (Respondent 2)

Another responded on shifted perception of evaluation by stating, *"I think written exams have almost zero real-world applications. Other assessment methods like presentations, discussions, and group projects are much more valuable. They help develop practical skills, and even learning diaries are useful in improving writing abilities."* (Respondent 13).

The qualitative findings of the main themes indicated differences between students' previous academic backgrounds and the Finnish evaluation system. Students described various challenges, including cultural mismatch such as discomfort in working in groups and experiencing evaluative anxiety due to performance pressure and unclear academic methods. Moreover, the students have also stated peer and teacher support as the most used coping mechanism and support system. These findings added contextual depth to the quantitative results and provided qualitative insights into how Asian students perceive evaluation practices in Finnish higher education.

## **6 Discussion and Conclusion**

This study investigated how south and East Asian international student enrolled at Finnish higher education perceive academic evaluation practices established in their programs and if they experience evaluative anxiety. This study was informed by Biggs' 3P model, which conceptualizes learning as determined by presage (student characteristics and prior educational backgrounds), process (learning approaches and perception of evaluative practices in Finnish universities), and product (evaluative anxiety and coping strategies). Thus, using Biggs (1989) 3P model as the framework of the study, the study adopted a mixed methods approach to explore the interplay or the interaction between students' prior academic backgrounds, the evaluation systems they come from and their current perception of the academic evaluation methods practiced in Finnish universities. This section of the thesis, discusses the findings through the lens of Biggs' model and existing literature, integrating both quantitative and qualitative results. The discussion is organized around the three phases of the model: Presage, process and product. This structure supports an in depth exploration of how students' pre-existing dispositions on their educational experiences interact with Finnish academic evaluation practices and influence their perceptions of learning and emotional wellbeing.

### **6.1 Interpreting students' perceptions of academic evaluation in Finnish higher education**

The quantitative results from the paired samples test supported Hypothesis one and provided two key insights in accordance with the presage factors of the Biggs 3p adopted model (1989). First, the findings indicate that students perceived evaluation practices in Finnish universities as more student-centered than teacher-centered. Second, the difference in mean scores suggests that the frequent use of certain evaluation methods in Finnish universities does not necessarily mean that these methods are perceived as effective in enhancing the learning process. The first insight aligns with previous findings, such as those by Nieminen et al. (2024), who reported that formative evaluation methods are encouraged in nearly all Finnish universities over traditional exams and grading systems. It also supports earlier research emphasizing that the Finnish education system promotes active learning and student autonomy as core aspects of academic evaluation, rather than a strictly teacher-centered approach (Ursin, 2020). Furthermore, case studies on Finnish teacher education programs have consistently shown that formative assessment methods are frequently employed with the goal of preparing future teachers for real-world demands (Yildirim et al., 2024). Additionally, a research by Maunumäki et al. (2022) illustrated the fundamentality of student centered feedback practices in Finnish higher education further supporting the stance on practice of formative methods within the Finnish education system.

The second insight corresponds with earlier research indicating that students are attentive to both the content of their academic evaluation methods and the way they are evaluated, which contributes to questioning if the evaluation methods used in their programs are effective or relevant. In line with previous studies, this highlights the importance of employing meaningful evaluation methods that accurately measure student performance (Struyven et al., 2004). Additionally, disciplinary or Program differences may influence students' perceptions of evaluation practices. For instance, students in content-heavy fields such as the hard sciences may prefer traditional exams and find reflective practices such as learning diaries less useful, whereas students in the soft sciences might benefit more from reflective evaluations and find exams less relevant (Postareff et al., 2012). In the current study majority of the respondents were from Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields and this could have been another reason for the results obtained from the findings.

Another significant factor highlighted by this study is the cultural mismatch experienced by South and East Asian students when transitioning to the Finnish education system. This mismatch may lead to skepticism regarding the effectiveness of academic evaluation methods used in Finnish universities and their programs. Previous research has indicated that in many Asian countries, higher education traditionally relies on summative, exam-oriented, and teacher-centered assessment methods, often culminating in end-of-year written examinations (Chung, 2019). In agreement with past research, South Asian higher education system validates summative, exam-focused approaches that continues to dominate higher education (Nawani & Goswami, 2020). Similarly, in East Asian countries influenced by Confucian-heritage cultures, exam-oriented systems emphasizing rote memorization are prevalent (Leong et al., 2018). This contrast in evaluation culture can pose challenges for international students adapting to a more formative and student-centered academic environment and the results from the findings are consistent with the empirical research presented in the current study (Pham Thi Hong, 2011).

Qualitatively, when respondents were asked about the evaluation practices in Finnish universities they responded stating the same methods as stated in the survey such as learning/reflection diaries, essays, in class discussions, presentations and group work, which aligns with the previous research that mentions the usage of formative evaluation methods as the centrality of the Finnish higher education system (Nieminen & Henrick, 2022). Some other methods that were uniquely stated were seminars that were graded, peer reviews and co-writing. Furthermore, some other findings for research question one were students highlighting fairness and flexibility as positive elements when defining academic evaluations in Finnish universities. Having said that, the flexibility of the evaluation system in Finnish universities is supported by Ursin (2020), who emphasized that allowing students to choose when to take their exams and to express their opinions on various evaluation methods contributes positively to the overall academic evaluation process in universities.

In a similar manner, fairness in academic evaluation was a prominent concern among the respondents in the current study, this perception is strongly supported by previous studies on evaluation methods established in higher education, for instance, a study on evaluation methods noted that both students and teachers perceived fairness in evaluation methods to be influenced by how well the evaluation methods aligned with the course objectives and how clearly the outcomes of the module was communicated with the students, and a successful combination of both factors lead students to perceive the evaluation methods as fair and transparent (Kreber et al., 2021). Likewise, Atjonen (2023) on a study of assessments in university of Eastern Finland, also suggested that, fairness in evaluation methods could be achieved by utilising versatile assessment methods, feedback and transparent grading system. These studies clearly indicate that international students from diverse educational backgrounds also interpret fairness through these same dimensions, suggesting that transparent and versatile evaluation practices can support equitable experiences for all learners in Finnish universities.

## **6.2 Understanding the connection between perceived effectiveness of the academic evaluation methods and Evaluative Anxiety**

Quantitative findings from the correlation tests indicated that students who viewed academic evaluation methods such as presentations, writing assignments, and learning diaries as effective tend to experience lower anxiety in academic settings. This finding highlight the role of pedagogically diverse and student-centered assessment strategies in reducing emotional stress and these results are consistent with the previous research studies on formative methods, where reflective journaling and online formative evaluation methods such as presentations reduced academic related anxiety among students at the university (Cisero, 2006), (Cassady & Gridley, 2005). Similar findings emerged in the work of Kangaslampi et al. (2022) on mathematics undergraduates at Alto University, who observed that student centered evaluation methods such as reflective writing, peer feedback and collaborative learning enhanced intrinsic motivation and higher order thinking skills, resulting in students feeling engaged with their studies and perceiving academics to be meaningful.

On the contrary, this finding could also mean that if the students perceive the academic evaluation methods in the Finnish higher education to be less effective they may experience higher evaluative anxiety. From the perspective of Biggs' 3P model, this reflects how the "process" element which is the evaluation practices is embedded in the learning environment (Finnish higher education) can directly influence the "product" or learning outcomes, which in the current include affective dimensions like evaluative anxiety.

Qualitative findings were examined to gain deeper insight into how academic evaluation practices in Finnish higher education relate to evaluative anxiety among Asian students. Many participants expressed appreciation for the formative and flexible nature of Finnish assessment practices, including opportunities for revision, peer feedback, and reflection. However, several respondents also reported feeling uncertain and stressed due to what they perceived as vague or inconsistent standards. For example, the evidence revealed that most participants experienced discomfort with group work and had difficulties with independent critical learning. This matches with prior research indicating that international Asian students at a New Zealand university found group work and group oral presentations to be particularly anxiety-inducing (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022). Similarly, Straker (2020) reported that Asian students at a British university struggled with group activities, mainly due to language barriers and differences in communication styles. A possible explanation for this is that many Asian students are primarily trained through exam-based assessment systems. Consequently, they may experience heightened anxiety when faced with unfamiliar academic evaluation methods such as reflective writing, group projects, or oral presentations (Sotardi & Dutton, 2022).

Another significant qualitative finding relates to the regulation and adaptation strategies that students developed to adapt to the new academic environment, an aspect that falls under the "process" factor in Biggs' (1989) model. Respondents noted study techniques such as mind mapping, revising, and active note taking, recoding and listening to lectures, time management, and emotional management as key strategies reflecting deep learning approaches. These findings corresponds with Zimmerman's (2002) research, which showed that students tend to develop metacognitive strategies and shift from surface learning (e.g., rote memorization) to deep learning approaches when they find evaluation methods and learning environments useful. Given that many Asian students come from teacher-centered education systems, they may initially adopt surface approaches but gradually shift toward deeper learning as they become more familiar with the expectations and academic evaluation methods used in Finnish higher education (Haverila, 2012). Additionally, Hirano's (2021) study supports the current findings, indicating that when students struggle with academic evaluation methods and social integration, they may resort to surface-level learning approaches and emotional disengagement, which can result in increased evaluative anxiety.

Beyond evaluative anxiety, the qualitative analysis also revealed that many respondents found Finnish academic evaluation methods effective in developing useful skills for both academic and employment contexts. This is parallel with previous research; for instance, Nieminen et al. (2024) emphasized that Finnish universities focus on fostering and demonstrating skills valuable in both academic and real-world settings. Moreover, Zhang (2020) found that East Asian students performed

better when they perceived the content and academic evaluation methods to be relevant and beneficial to their future careers.

### **6.3 Student coping strategies in the face of unfamiliar evaluation methods**

Although not formally a part of the original 3P model (Biggs, 1989), this section extends the positioning of Evaluative anxiety as an outcome of the learning process and discusses its role in influencing coping strategies and support systems in mediating evaluative anxiety and supporting learning within the framework of international students in Finland's tertiary education. Quantitative findings from Hypothesis 3 revealed two insights. First the mean scores indicated that engaging with peers (was the most frequently used coping strategy, followed by perceived support received from professors and instructors, and the least utilized coping strategy was the use of university-provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety. This outcome mirrors the findings of Rienties et al. (2012), who studied the academic performance of international students in business programs in the Netherlands. Their research highlighted that international students often encounter stress when adapting to new cultural and evaluation methods, and that social support from peers and instructors plays a crucial role in helping them adjust and cope effectively with anxiety.

Additionally, another study also reported that Asian International students were more inclined to look for support from peers rather than seeking help from resources provided by the university such as counselling or mental health services (Misra & Castillo, 2004) and a reason for this could be that international students especially those from Asia may perceive that the university-provided services lack cultural sensitivity and may not understand their problem, thus seeking emotional support from peers over institutional support. Therefore, it is not surprising that the use of university-provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) was the least used coping strategy among the respondents. This could have several explanations and in alignment with previous research that highlights the reluctance of Asian students to go for mental health services due to the cultural stigma they may have as Asian cultures consider mental health to be private or even shameful (Maeshima & Parent, 2022).

The second insight from multiple regression analysis was that while the overall model indicates significance, only one variable (use of university-provided resources) significantly contributed to the prediction of evaluative anxiety. Interestingly, this variable's positive association with anxiety might suggest that students encountering considerable anxiety are more expected to seek institutional help, rather than the resources themselves increasing anxiety. Most of the predictors in the regression model did not show a significant effect on evaluative anxiety. This could be partly because of the small number of participants ( $N = 45$ ), and thus it is difficult to obtain significant results even if

real relationships exist (Cohen, 1992). Another reason for this result is that most participants gave similar answers to some questions so there might not have been enough variety in the data to find strong effects, which is also known as restricted range, limiting significant results (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). This results are in agreement with earlier studies, where Hyun et al. (2007), indicated that Asian international students did not utilize mental health services provided by the university, even when they reported experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety mainly due to the cultural stigma and perceived lack of effectiveness.

Qualitative findings were also consistent with the quantitative results, where seeking help from peers and teachers emerged as the most commonly adopted coping mechanisms. Notably, only one respondent from the entire sample in the current study mentioned seeking counselling services. Furthermore, several respondents expressed that they have gradually adapted to the evaluation methods used in their programs and are experiencing less anxiety over time. In agreement with previous literature, which presumes that as international students become accustomed with academic expectations and evaluation standards, their levels of academic stress tend to decrease (Andrade, 2006). In addition, Sawir et al. (2008) highlighted that adaptation over time, combined with supportive peer and faculty relationships, contributes significantly to reduced academic anxiety and improved emotional adjustment.

As noted by Dai (2023), European universities often assume that international students naturally acquire the strategies necessary to meet coursework expectations, including the ability to engage in critical reading and writing. In reality, these are areas many Asian students find most challenging, which often leads to anxiety around evaluation and performance. Therefore, it is essential that Asian students are offered introductory sessions on academic evaluation methods, including clear rubrics and defined expectations within their programs. These measures can help students become familiar with assessment practices and reduce uncertainty. The study also found that Asian students actively seek both peer and instructor support. This underscores the importance of instructors providing constructive, timely feedback on student assessments. Research shows that when international students receive meaningful feedback, they are more likely to remain motivated and perform well (Gonsalves, 2024).

Another implication obtained from this study is to increase the awareness of mental health services within the university, and to train health professional to be culturally sensitive to support Asian students proactively. Additionally, given that peer support emerged as a recurring theme in this study, institutions should consider implementing or expanding peer mentoring programs not only at the start of academic programs but throughout the academic journey. Such initiatives can facilitate smoother transitions for international students. Research indicates that peer mentoring enhances

academic performance, emotional well-being, and social integration (Gehreke et al., 2024). Finally, the voices of Asian students should be actively considered in the design and development of evaluation methods. Research demonstrates that engaging students in this process ensures that educational practices remain responsive and effective (Gonsalves, 2023).

In synthesizing the key insights, this study explored the perceptions and experiences of South and East Asian Master's students in Finnish universities through the lens of Biggs' 3P model (1989), integrating both quantitative and qualitative findings. In the Presage phase, the findings indicated that students' prior educational backgrounds in exam-oriented, teacher-centered systems contributed to initial anxiety during their transition to the more formative academic evaluation methods used in Finnish universities. However, analysis from both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that, over time, students came to view Finnish academic evaluation methods as more flexible and student-centered. This shift contributed to a reduction in evaluative anxiety. In the Process phase, it became clear that adaptation and self-regulation strategies such as time and emotional management enabled students to adjust to the new evaluation approaches. Nonetheless, challenges remained. Some students reported unclear academic expectations, difficulties with group work, and a lack of clarity regarding learning outcomes. Finally, the Product phase emphasized the persistence of evaluative anxiety, with many students reporting feelings of stress and confusion. Some respondents also pointed to a lack of culturally sensitive support systems and inconsistencies in the quality of feedback. Despite these challenges, students' coping strategies proved instrumental in gradually reducing their evaluative anxiety over time. As this study concludes, it echoes the insight offered by Päivi Atjonen, who stated, "Assessment is such an important matter for students and for their learning progress that it would be advisable for each teacher to spend time on such a discussion."

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*In this thesis, artificial intelligence was used to support the writing process, specifically for language editing and proofreading. Further, no personal data was disclosed to it, and it was not used to generate ideas or interpretations*

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Invitation to the online survey

#### Are you an Asian student studying in Finland? Share your experience!

Dear All,

I hope you're doing well! My name is Teena Perera, and I am a final-year student at the University of Turku, studying Education and Learning. I am conducting a research study titled **"Perceptions of Academic Evaluation Practices and its role in Evaluative Anxiety: A Comparative Study of Asian Students in International Master's Degree Programs in Finnish Universities"**. My study seeks to explore on how Asian students **perceive academic evaluation practices in Finnish universities, how these perceptions might relate to evaluative anxiety, and how students adapt to different assessment methods.**

#### *Important Information for you.*

#### **Are you a suitable participant for the study?**

You are eligible to participate if you are an Asian student currently studying a Master's degree (International degree/ Degrees conducted in English language) at a Finnish university.

#### **What will taking part involve?**

The questionnaire will take approximately **10- 15 minutes** to complete, and all responses will remain **anonymous and confidential**. Your input is highly appreciated and will contribute to a better understanding of student experiences in international education settings.

#### **Do you have to take part?**

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you are under no obligation to take part. You may withdraw at any time without providing a reason.

**If you are interested in participating, please follow this link to complete the survey or Scan the QR Code below: <https://link.webpolsurveys.com/S/5365D38FC2B11439>**



Should you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [teena.b.perera@utu.fi](mailto:teena.b.perera@utu.fi). Thank you for your time and participation!

Best regards,

Teena Perera

Final-Year Student, Education and Learning

University of Turku

## Appendix 2: Survey

### Perceptions of Academic Evaluation Practices and Its Role in Evaluative Anxiety: A Comparative Study of Asian Students in International Master's Degree Programs in Finnish Universities.

#### Section 1: Demographic Information

How long have you been studying in Finland?

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months to 1 year
- More than 1 year

What is your field of study?

- Business & Management
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)
- Social Sciences & Humanities
- Education & Teaching
- Health & Medicine
- Law & Public Policy
- Arts & Media

What is your nationality?

.....

#### Section 2: Academic Evaluation Practices

*Academic evaluation practices refer to the various ways students are assessed in higher education, in the current study they are, Presentations (Group/Individual), learning/reflective diaries, written assignments and exams.*

##### I. Frequency of Evaluation Methods

(Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always)

In-class discussions/active participation are used as part of the academic evaluation practices.

Group presentations are required in your courses.

Individual presentations are required in your courses.

Video presentations are required in your courses.

Learning diaries are assigned as part of your coursework.

Writing assignments (e.g., essays, reports) are a key component of your courses.

Exams are used as an evaluation method.

Are there any additional evaluation methods used in your courses? (Open-ended)

Are there any evaluation methods that you think should be included in the curriculum? (Open-ended)

How do the types of assessments in Finnish higher education (e.g., presentations, group work, and written assignments) compare to those in your home country? (Open ended)

In your home country's education system, how much weight is placed on final exams compared to coursework or other forms of assessment? (Open ended).

## II. Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods

(Scale: 1 = Does not help at all, 2 = Helps a little, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Helps somewhat, 5 = Helps very much)

In-class discussions support my learning.

Presentations (individual/group/video) enhance my understanding of the subject matter.

Learning diaries contribute to my academic progress.

Writing assignments help improve my academic skills.

Exams (if applicable) help me retain and apply knowledge.

How do you think these evaluation methods prepare you for real-world applications or professional development? (Open-ended)

In your home country's education system, how much focus is placed on collaborative learning (e.g., group projects, peer feedback) compared to Finnish universities? (Open ended).

Do you feel that the assessment methods in Finnish universities are fairer and equitable compared to those in your home country? (Open ended)

### Section 3: Academic Anxiety Levels

(Note: Cassady, J.C. (2020). *Academic Anxiety Scale*. Academic Anxiety Resource Center. <https://sites.bsu.edu/aarc/research/academic-anxiety-scale/>)

Considering the answers to section 1, Please complete the following items using the four-point scale below.

1 = Not at all typical of me

2 = somewhat typical of me

3 = Quite typical of me

4 = Very typical of me

I worry that my best is not as good as expected in my Finnish university.

I tend to put off doing university work because it stresses me.

I often worry that I am not doing assignments properly.

I am less confident about my academic abilities than my classmates.

I have a sense of dread when I am in my university classrooms.

I tend to find my instructors intimidating.

I spend much of my time at my Finnish university worrying about what is next.

There is something about University that scares me.

I'm concerned about what my classmates think about my abilities.

I often feel sick when I need to work on a major class assignments.

I have a hard time handling school responsibilities.

Do you often feel anxious about the differences in academic evaluation practices between your home country and Finland? (Open ended)

How does the level of academic pressure you experienced in your home country compare to the academic pressure you experience in Finland? (Open ended)

#### Section 4: Coping Strategies and Support Systems

(Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree)

I have developed effective study techniques to manage academic demands in Finland.

Engaging with peers helps me cope with academic stress.

I seek support from family or friends to handle academic pressure.

Finnish universities offer sufficient resources (e.g., counselling, academic advisors) to help manage academic stress.

I actively use university-provided resources (e.g., workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety.

I feel supported by my professors and instructors when I experience academic difficulties.

I have adapted well to Finnish academic evaluation methods over time.

What are some effective study techniques that you have developed on your own? (Open ended).

Thank you!

### Appendix 3: Privacy Notice

Name of the register	Perceptions of Academic Evaluation Practices and its Role in Evaluative Anxiety: A Comparative Study of Asian Students in International Master's Degree Programs in Finnish Universities.
Data Controller	Teena Perera, teena.b.perera@utu.fi
Contact information of the responsible person	Teena Perera, teena.b.perera@utu.fi
Purpose and legal basis for the processing of personal data	<p>This is a survey research and will collect both quantitative and qualitative data to explore on how Asian students perceive academic evaluation practices in Finnish Universities and how these perceptions might relate to evaluative anxiety, and how students adapt to Different assessment methods.</p> <p>First, an invitation to participate in the study will be sent to the students via Email through the university coordinators and through the University departments. The Survey will consist of the consent form which will contain information about the study and their consent to take part in the study. Once the consent is given the participants will be directed to the survey which will collect basic demographic data such as their duration of education in a Finnish university and their field of study. Then there will be 3 sections that will collect data pertaining to the study.</p> <p>The legal basis for processing personal data in the Article 6 of the EU General Data Protection Regulation is:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Processing is necessary for scientific research (public interest, Point 1a of the Article 6)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Data subject has given their consent to processing personal data (consent, Point 1e of the Article 6)</p>

	<input type="checkbox"/> Other, what _____
Processed personal data	The following information of the data subjects is stored in the register: Nationality, how long the participants have studied in Finland and their field of studies in the university.
Recipients and recipient groups of personal data.	The data will not be transferred or disclosed to parties outside the research, only the researcher and the supervisor will have access to the data.
Information on transferring data to third countries	Personal data will not be disclosed to parties outside the EU or the European Economic Area.
Retention period of personal data or criteria for its determination	The research data will be kept confidential thus the participants will be anonymous. The collected data will be kept in a secure place which is solely accessible to the researcher and all data will be permanently deleted latest by 31 <sup>st</sup> June 2030.
Rights of the data subject	The data subject has the right to access their personal data retained by the Data Controller, the right to rectification or erasure of data, and the right to restrict or object the processing of data. The right to erasure is not applied in scientific or historic research purposes in so far as the right to erasure is likely to render impossible or seriously impair the achievement of the objectives of that processing. The realization of the right to erasure is assessed on a case-by-case basis. The data subject has the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority.
Information on the source of personal data	In order to send the invitations to the survey, email addresses or the possibility of forwarding a message are requested from the universities.
Information on the existence of automatic decision-making, including profiling	The data will not be used for automatic decision-making or profiling.

#### Appendix 4: Coding scheme created based on Biggs' 3P Model (Aligned with Deductive Content Analysis)

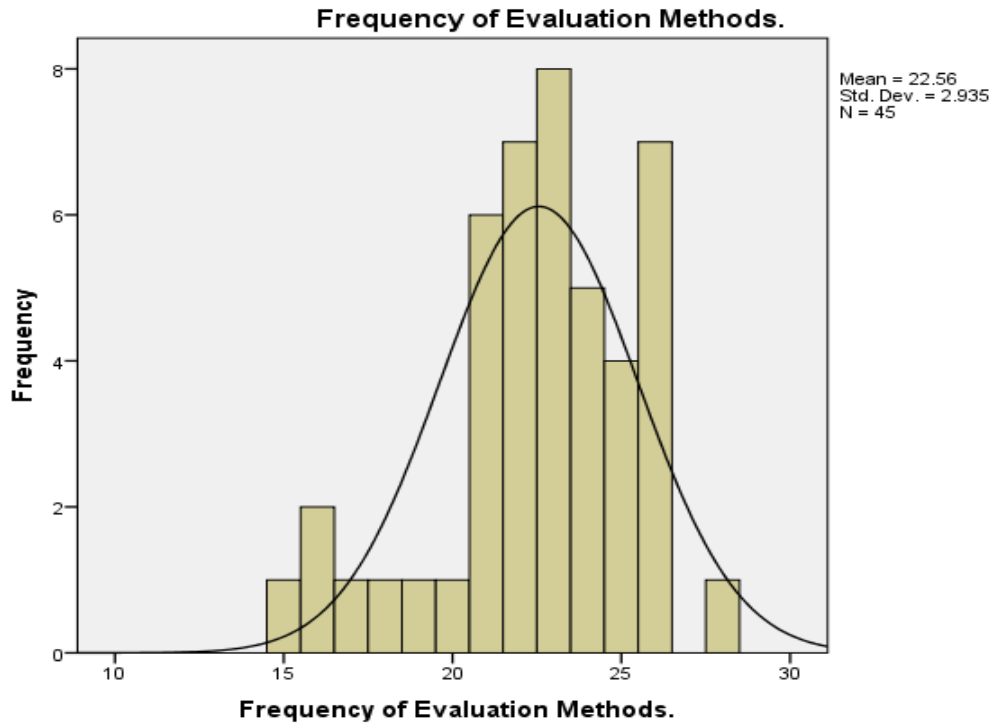
3P Model Area	Themes	Sub-Themes	Definition	Linked Questions in the survey	Supports RQ
<b>Presage</b>	Prior Academic Experience in the home country	-Academic or exam pressure -Exam-centric culture -Lack of formative methods -Lack of group work -Rote memorization -Teacher-centered approach	Descriptions of past academic evaluation experiences in students' home countries.	Q10, Q11	RQ1
	Cultural Academic Mismatch	- Confusion about academic expectations - Difficulty with independent learning - Group work discomfort	Expressions of discomfort or confusion due to differences in academic culture or expectations	Q10, Q11	RQ2
	Perceived fairness of evaluation methods	- Feedback quality -Satisfaction with grading and Evaluation methods <i>- overall perception about fairness of the evaluation methods</i>	Perceived roles, fairness, or clarity of teachers in Finnish vs. home systems	Q17	RQ1, RQ2
<b>Process</b>	Regulation and Adaptation Strategies towards learning process	-Emotional Management -Other methods of regulating -Seeking Feedback -Time Management	Descriptions of behavioural or cognitive efforts to adjust to Finnish evaluation methods	Q15, Q16, Q17	RQ3
	Student Engagement in the Finnish University	- Class participation/ Interaction in group work	Statements reflecting levels of participation and interaction in academic activities	Q15, Q16	RQ2, RQ3
	Perceived Effectiveness And relevance of academic evaluation methods	- Usefulness for skill-building and Employment opportunities	Opinions on how much various methods support learning or skill development	Q15, Q16	RQ2

	Evaluation methods and Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation methods used in Finnish universities</li> <li>-Flexibility with Evaluation methods</li> <li>-Preference towards types of academic evaluation methods</li> </ul>	Suggestions or comparisons revealing preferred evaluation styles	Q8, Q9, Q17	RQ1
<b>Product</b>	Evaluative Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fear of failure or Uncertainty</li> <li>- Performance pressure</li> <li>- Language barriers</li> <li>-Unclear academic methods</li> </ul>	Emotional expressions of stress, worry, or fear related to academic evaluation	Q12, Q13	RQ2
	Coping Mechanisms or strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoidance</li> <li>- Counselling services</li> <li>-Peer and teacher support</li> </ul>	Techniques or strategies personally adopted to manage academic stress	Q8 (Section 4)	RQ3
	Change Over Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reduced anxiety</li> <li>- Increased confidence</li> <li>- Shifted evaluation preferences</li> </ul>	Descriptions of adjustment, growth, or shifting perceptions of academic evaluation	Q13	RQ3

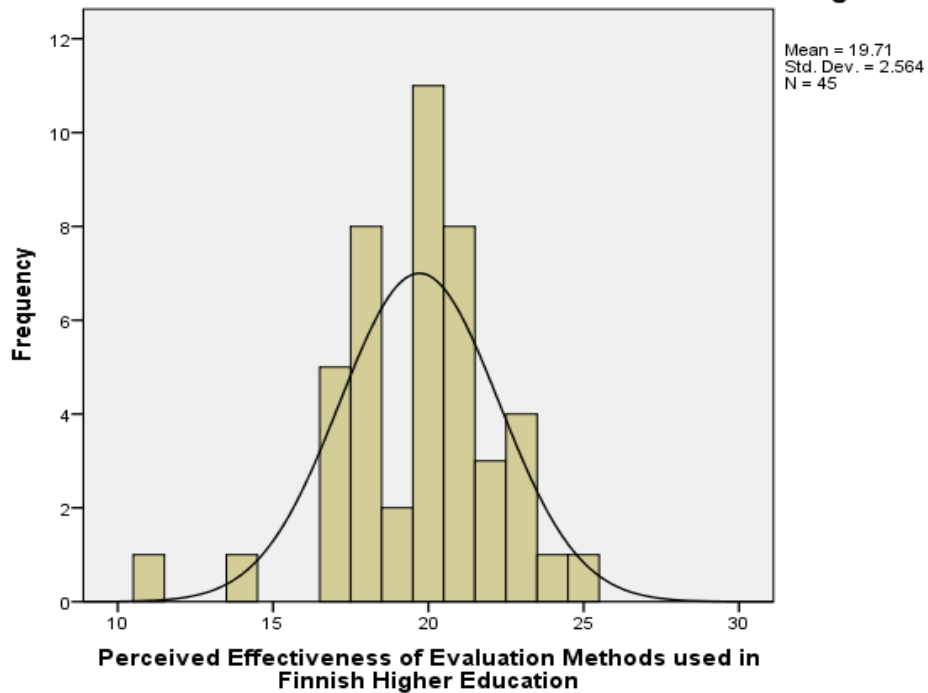
**Note:** This coding scheme follows a **deductive content analysis** approach. Categories are theory-driven, based on Biggs' 3P Model.

## Appendix 5: Statistical assumptions examined prior to hypothesis testing and Reliability analysis

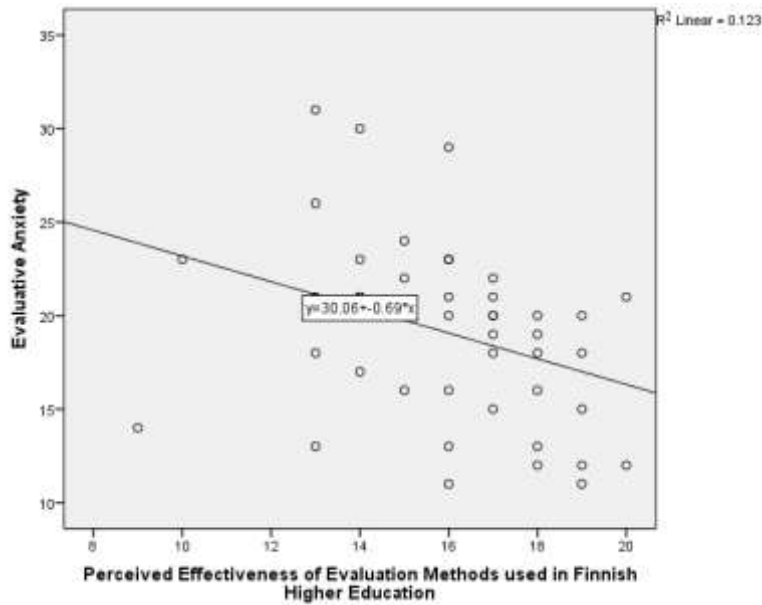
### Assumptions before running a paired t test: H1



### **Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education**

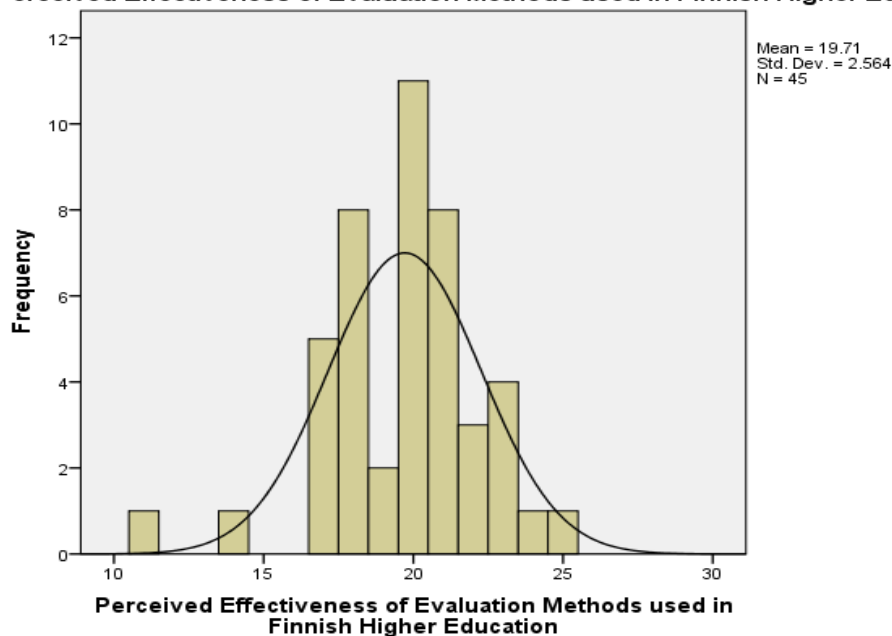


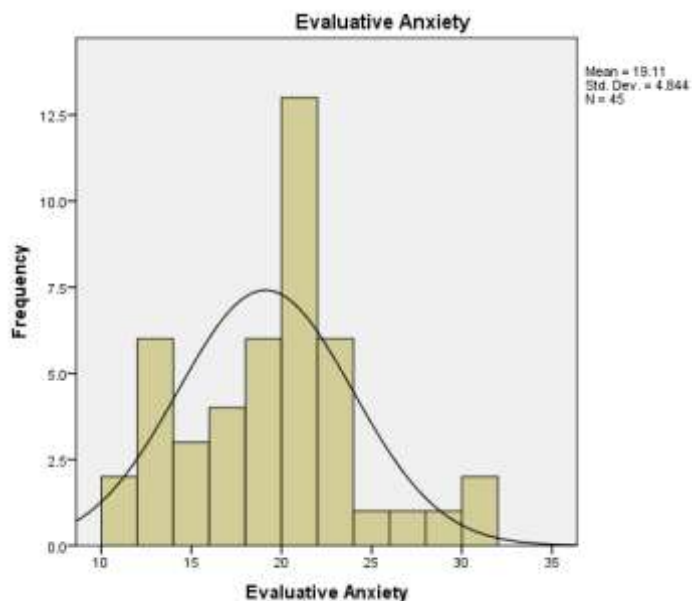
### Assumptions before running a Pearson Correlation: H2



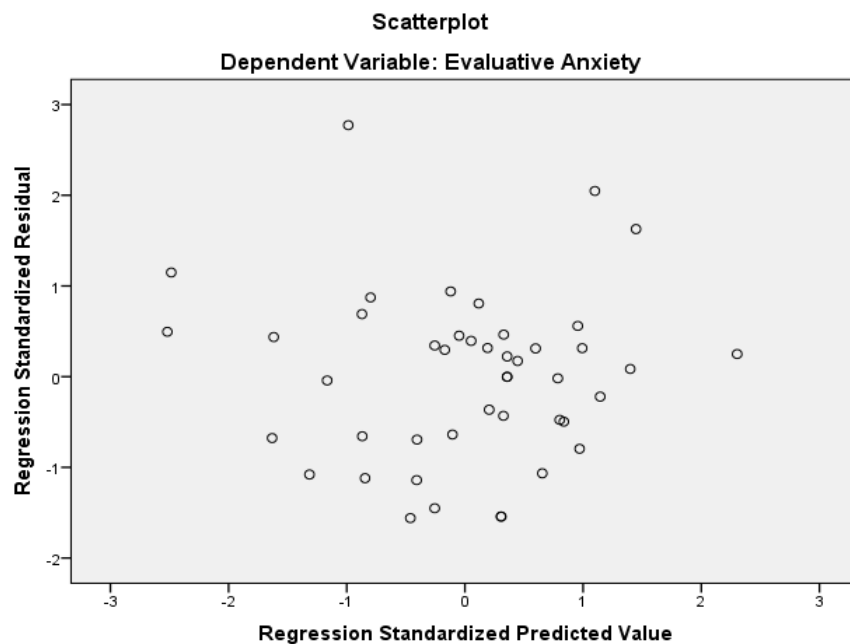
Assumption of Linearity is met as there is straight line pattern in the graph. Both the variables are continuous so the second assumption is also met. Assumption of Normality is also met as checked visually on histograms and Shapiro Wilk tests.

### **Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education**

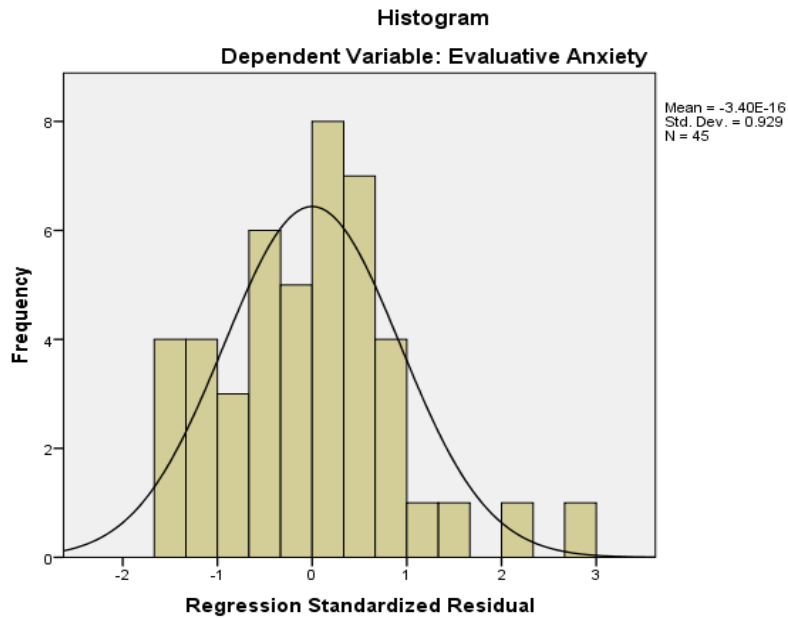




### Assumptions checked before running a multiple linear regression: H3



The relationship between each independent variables and the dependent variable seems to be linear as there is a random cloud of dots when viewed visually. There is a random even scatter around the horizontal line at 0, indicating Homoscedasticity. Independence of Errors was checked by looking at the Durbin-Watson statistic in the model summary table, the value was 1.88, since this value is between 1.5 and 2.5, and independence of errors assumption is met. Multicollinearity was also met as the VIF > 10. Normality was checked visually via histograms.



### Reliability analysis of the scales

Scale: Reliability of the scale Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.510	4

#### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
PE1: In-class discussions support my learning.	11.87	4.209	.264	.470

PE2: Presentations (individual/group/video) enhance my understanding o	11.89	4.374	.284	.455
PE3: Learning Diaries contribute to my academic progress.	12.44	2.707	.393	.358
PE4: Writing assignments help improve my academic skills.	11.60	4.700	.327	.441

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### Scale: Reliability of the scale Frequency of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.600	6

#### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
In -class discussions/active participation	16.24	5.962	.350	.499
Group presentations	16.09	6.446	.420	.475
Individual presentations	16.80	6.118	.355	.497
Video presentations	17.56	6.025	.389	.479

Learning Diaries	16.53	6.164	.368	.491
Writing assignments (eg, essays, reports)	15.22	8.768	-.107	.636

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### Scale: Reliability of the scale Evaluative Anxiety

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.800	11

#### Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
EA1	17.09	18.537	.640	.751
EA 2	17.13	18.845	.494	.767
EA 3	16.60	20.336	.335	.785
EA 4	17.29	18.119	.582	.756
EA 5	17.73	20.882	.393	.779
EA 6	17.87	22.073	.224	.792
EA 7	17.11	17.965	.498	.769
EA 8	17.82	22.559	.100	.802
EA 9	17.53	20.936	.284	.790
EA 10	17.49	18.983	.636	.753
EA 11	17.44	18.571	.683	.747

### Scale: Reliability of the scale Coping strategies Used

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's	
Alpha	N of Items
.700	6

## Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Self-Developed Study techniques to deal with Academic Demands	18.29	8.346	.274	.669
Engaging with peers to cope with academic stress.	17.89	8.146	.198	.697
Sufficient resources offered by Finnish Universities (eg, counseling, academic advisors) to help manage academic stress.	18.33	6.136	.569	.565
Use of university- provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety.	19.31	6.674	.323	.678
Perceived support professors and instructors.	18.02	6.795	.591	.571

Adaption to the Finnish academic evaluation methods	18.04	7.180	.569	.587
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## Appendix 6: SPSS Outputs for Hypothesis 1, 2 and 3

### Hypothesis 1 results for the paired samples test

Paired Samples Test		Paired Differences							Sig. (2-tailed)
		95% Confidence Interval					t	df	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	of the Difference				
Pair				Mean	Lower	Upper			
1	Frequency of Evaluation Methods. - Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education	3.76	3.63	.54	2.66	4.84	6.93	44	.00

### Hypothesis 2 results for the correlation test

Correlations		Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education		Evaluative Anxiety
Perceived Effectiveness of Evaluation Methods used in Finnish Higher Education	Pearson Correlation		1	-.351*
	Sig. (2-tailed)			.018
	N		45	45
Evaluative Anxiety	Pearson Correlation		-.351*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018	
	N		45	45

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Hypothesis 3 results from multiple regression

#### Model Summary

Model	R	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
				R Square	F Change	df1	df2		
1	.518	.268	4.459	.268	2.321	6	38	.052	1.875

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adaption to the Finnish academic evaluation methods, Use of university-provided resources (eg, workshops, mental health services) to handle academic anxiety., Engaging with peers to cope with academic stress., Self-Developed Study techniques to deal with Academic Demands, Perceived support professors and instructors., Sufficient resources offered by Finnish Universities (eg, counseling, academic advisors) to help manage academic stress.

b. Dependent Variable: Evaluative Anxiety