Identifying Misalignments in Language Proficiency using CEFR Scales in a Context Outside of Europe

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Introduction

The Preparatory Year Programme (PYP) was established for students enrolled in universities that deliver instruction in English. These include medical and healthcare colleges. The aim of the programme is to prepare matriculated students to meet the English language demands required of first year students in these colleges. However, the students' proficiency in English and more specifically in English writing was frequently fails to meet the standard required, despite the intervention of the PYP.

Aim of the study

Focusing on the medical and healthcare students, this study aims to identify the misalignment between the students' English language proficiency towards the end of the PYP and the actual language level required in the first year of study in the medical and healthcare colleges (The College of Medicine, Pharmacy, Nursing, Dentistry and Applied Medical Sciences AMS).

Objectives

1. Identify the CEFR level(s) reached by the students at the end of the PYP academic year (Phase I).

2. Identify the CEFR level(s) needed by the students during the first-year in the medical and healthcare colleges (Phase II)

3. To identify the misalignment (if any) between the levels reached and the level required for first-year students in the medical and healthcare colleges.
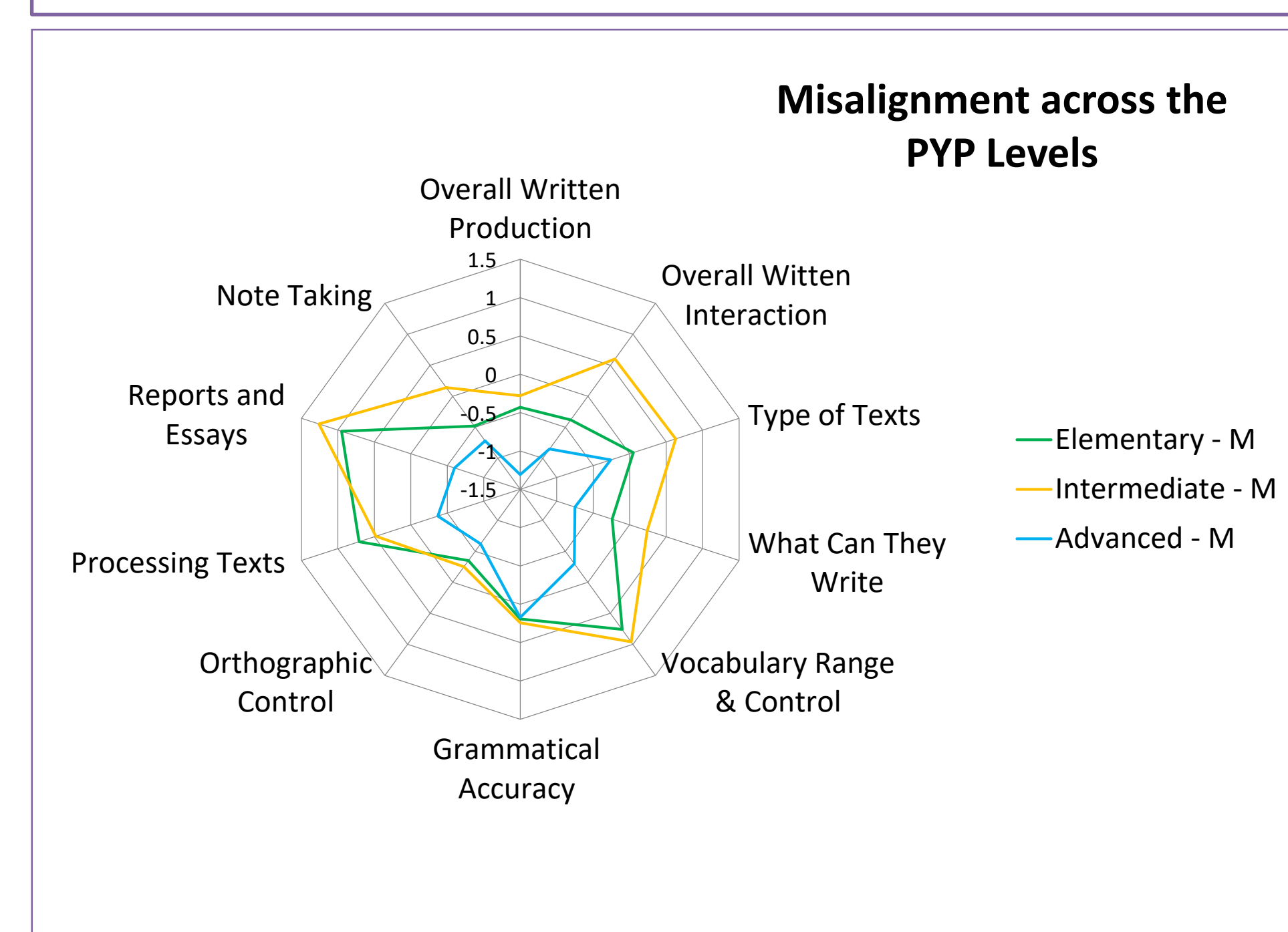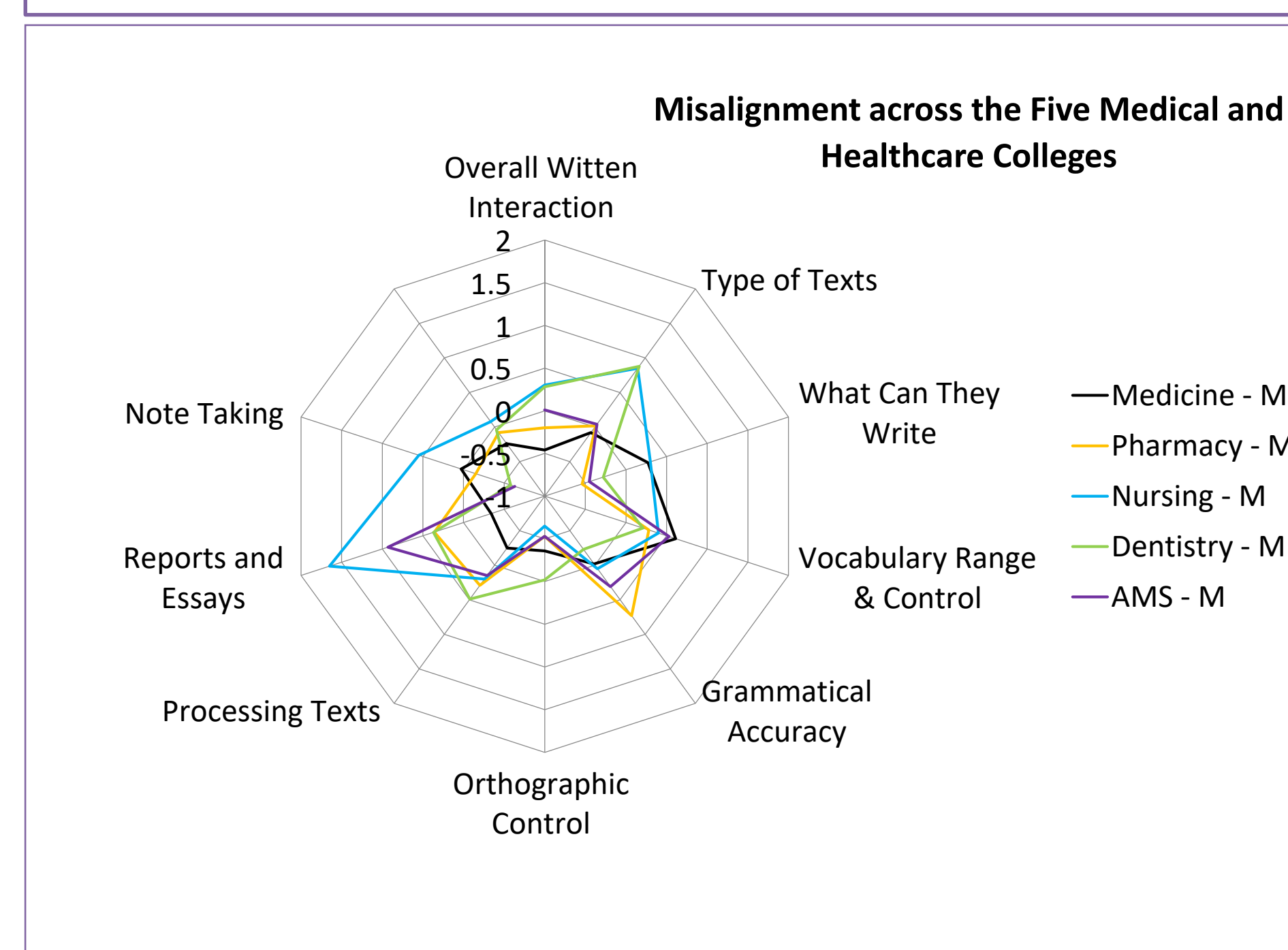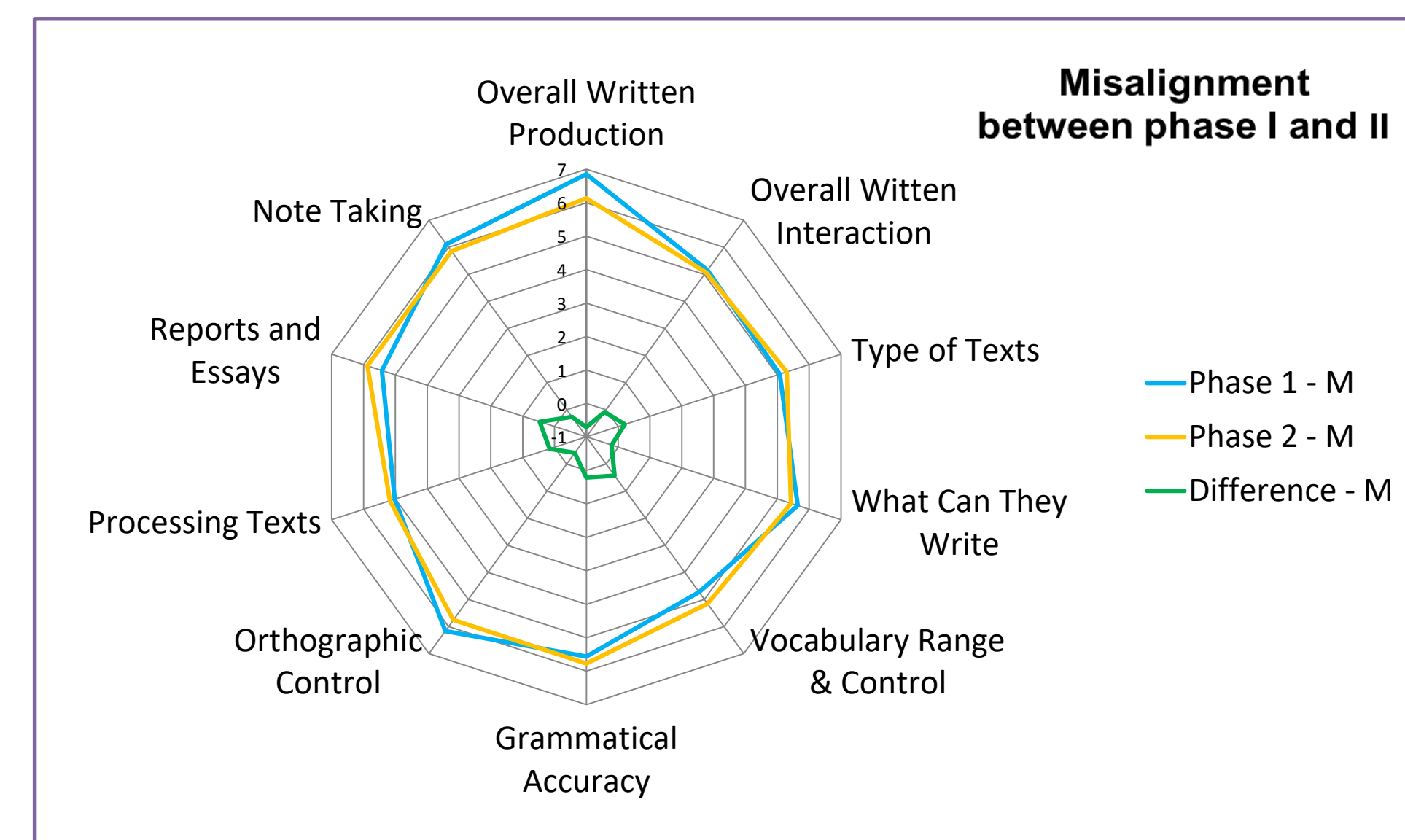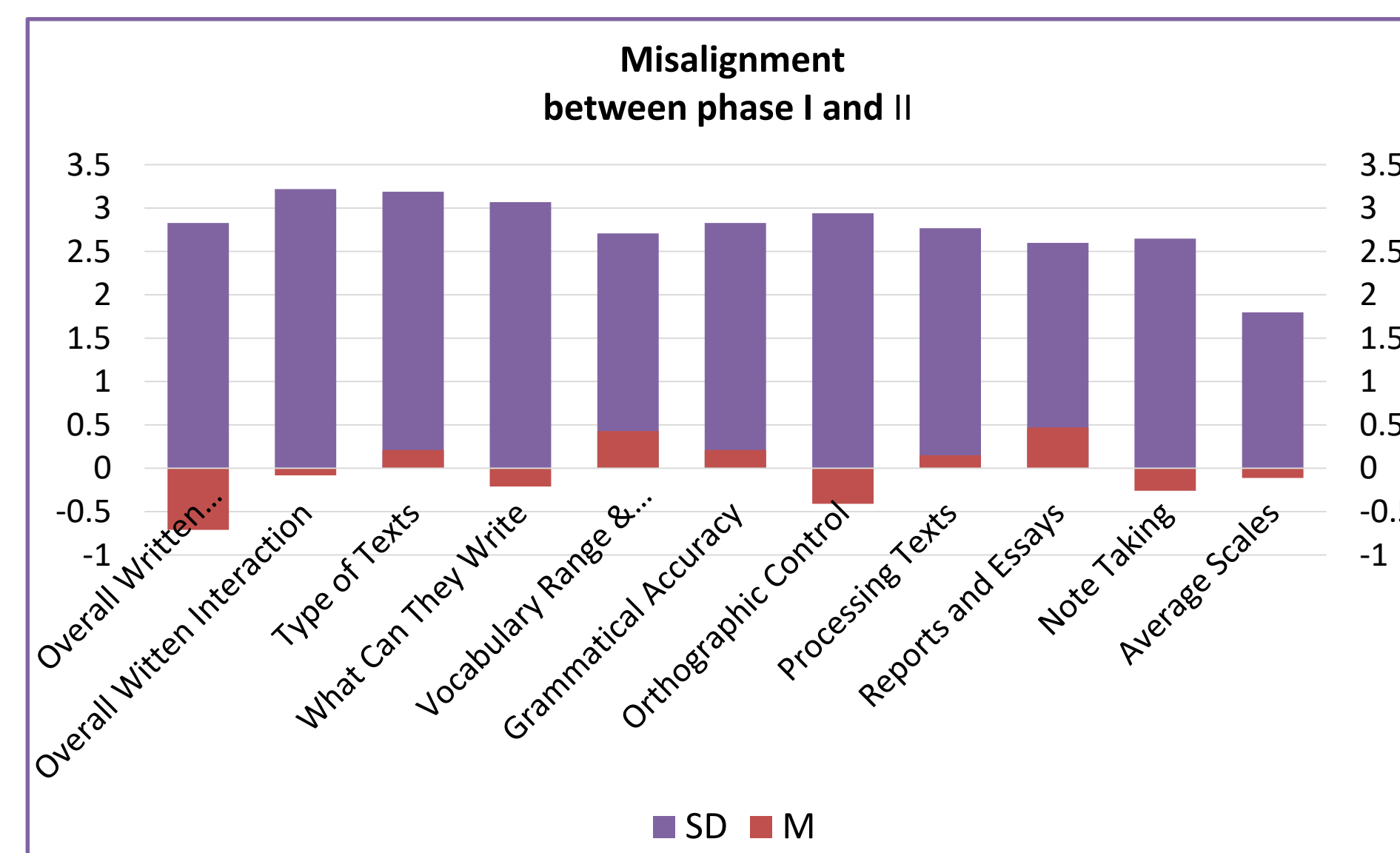
Methods

1. A longitudinal mixed-methods approach was followed towards the end of each academic year:

2. In Phase I, the CEFR levels were identified by students' self-assessment and tutors' assessment of the students' levels using ten CEFR scales related to writing.

3. In Phase II, the CEFR levels required were identified by the first-year medical and healthcare students and their academic staff using the same ten CEFR scales.

4. The results from Phases I and II were compared in order to identify any misalignment in the achievement against CEFR scales.

5. Qualitative data was also elicited in order to shed further light on the students' needs in writing

6. In this poster, only QUAN Student data will be reported.

Results

Differences Between Students' assessment at phase 1 and 2

CEFR Scales	N	Phase I (Levels Achieved) M	SD	Phase II (Levels Needed) M	SD	Difference M	SD	t	df	P	Cohen's d
Overall Written Production	252	6.85	2.23	6.13	1.94	-0.71	2.83	-4.011	251	<0.001	-0.250
Overall Witten Interaction	252	5.16	2.68	5.08	2.06	-0.08	3.22	-0.372	251	0.710	-0.031
Type of Texts	252	5.08	2.56	5.30	2.25	0.21	3.19	1.068	251	0.287	0.063
What Can They Write	250	5.64	2.40	5.43	2.36	-0.21	3.07	-1.070	249	0.286	-0.065
Vocabulary Range & Control	250	4.73	2.39	5.16	1.93	0.43	2.71	2.495	249	0.013	0.148
Grammatical Accuracy	251	5.56	2.60	5.77	1.83	0.21	2.83	1.184	250	0.238	0.071
Orthographic Control	249	6.17	2.56	5.76	2.14	-0.41	2.94	-2.199	248	0.029	-0.138
Processing Texts	250	5.02	2.19	5.17	2.00	0.15	2.77	0.845	249	0.399	0.036
Reports and Essays	250	5.42	2.50	5.88	1.30	0.47	2.60	2.847	249	0.005	0.192
Note Taking	250	6.12	2.41	5.86	1.63	-0.26	2.65	-1.573	249	0.117	-0.111
Average Scales	252	5.67	1.76	5.55	1.28	-0.11	1.80	-0.990	251	0.323	-0.056

Misalignment between phase I and II

Misalignment between phase I and II

Misalignment across the Five Medical and Healthcare Colleges

Misalignment across the PYP Levels

Discussion and Conclusion

In general, there is no significant discrepancy between the students' proficiency levels in phase I and the proficiency level they require in the first year medical and healthcare colleges in phase II. However, the misalignment was observed in the Overall *Written Production scale*, the students perceived their proficiency as higher than the level required (D=0.71). On the contrary, the misalignment was more obvious in *the Vocabulary Range and Control Scale* and the *Report and Essay scale* (D= -0.428 and -.468, respectively). This means that the students were having greater difficulty with their vocabulary, essay and report writing compared to the other skills.

When comparing the differences across the five medical and healthcare colleges, there are no significant differences between the colleges in terms of the mean differences except in the *Reports and Essay scale*. In this area, the college of Nursing showed greater misalignment compared to the other colleges.

The elementary and intermediate level students showed that their proficiency levels were actually lower than the required level, whereas the students at the advanced level found their proficiency exceeded the required levels. For example, in the *Report and Essay* area, the difference in mean for the elementary level was (D= -0.952), in the intermediate level (D=-1.262) and in the advanced level (0.602).

On the one hand, it was found that most of the advanced students joined the medical college, which could explain the minor misalignment in this college. Yet, most of the elementary level students joined the college of nursing, which also helps to potentially explain the greater gap in the proficiency level in this college.