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DELNA

Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment

DELNA has been developed in conjunction with the Language Testing Research Centre at the University of Melbourne

Handbook for students at the University of Auckland

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What is DELNA?

DELNA is in place at the University of Auckland to assess your readiness for study at an English-medium university and to identify any language needs you might have. Some students have difficulties in their studies because they do not yet have the academic English language skills needed to succeed at university level.

The DELNA assessments:

- will *not* exclude you from the courses you are enrolled in; and it
- will *not* appear on your official academic record.

However, **the DELNA assessments will:**

- help identify your strengths and weaknesses in academic English;
- give you feedback about your academic English skills as you start your studies;
- guide you through English language enrichment resources and an appropriate English language enrichment programme, if you would benefit from it; and
- communicate with your Faculty about the areas where you may need help.

DELNA is a **three-step** process:

1. The DELNA Screening

All new students at the University of Auckland do the DELNA Screening, no matter what their language background is or where they went to school. The computer-based Screening is a quick “health check” of your English language skills.

You should do the Screening as early as possible, either prior to or during Orientation Week, or in the first two weeks of your first semester.

You can book your Screening session at delnatask.com/booking either in a specific group (e.g., Doctoral candidates) or in one of the general sessions.

2. The DELNA Diagnosis

Depending on your Screening outcome, you may be asked to follow the Screening with the DELNA Diagnosis.

This assessment identifies your strengths and weaknesses in academic English language, which will be reported to you in the form of a written profile. If one or more of your skills need improvement, you will be guided to appropriate English language enrichment resources that best suit your needs.

The Diagnosis comprises three tasks: Listening, Reading and Writing. Results are available within 10 business days after the assessment. You will receive an email that may ask you to book an appointment with the DELNA Language Adviser, who will confidentially discuss your results with you and guide you to the most appropriate support.

3. Meeting the DELNA Language Adviser

Following the Diagnosis, your next step is to meet with one of our friendly language advisers. The language adviser will discuss your Diagnosis results with you and give you advice on courses, workshops and resources that will help you make the most of your studies.

Useful information for students

DELNA is not a test!

The University of Auckland wants to identify students who might need help with academic English and provide them with access to resources and support. This is why students take DELNA.

You do the Screening once only. You may be required to follow it with the Diagnosis, which you also do once only.

Your faculty or course coordinator may arrange for you to be added to DELNA Screening course on Canvas. If that is the case, just follow the instructions there.

Otherwise, you can book for your DELNA Screening at delnatask.com/booking.

You will need your University of Auckland username and password to create a booking. You are advised to use your University email address (e.g. xxxx123@aucklanduni.ac.nz) as this ensures that your results will reach you.

Ratonga Hauātanga Taurira | Student Disability Services (SDS)

Please [visit the SDS website](#) to read about how the University supports students with disabilities in their studies.

Neurodivergent students

Neurodivergent students can receive support and assistance from [Inclusive Learning](#).

If you have dyslexia and you are required to complete the DELNA Diagnosis (after taking the DELNA Screening), you can do this with your approved Special Conditions. [Contact the DELNA team](#) to discuss arrangements.

You can [apply for Special Conditions](#) online.

Step 1: The DELNA Screening

The Screening consists of two tasks, which you must complete within a time limit.

You can do the practice online at [DELNA Screening practice](#).

Task 1: Vocabulary Task

Time allowed: Practice time + **7 minutes**

Research shows that vocabulary knowledge predicts success at university (Loewen & Ellis, 2004). The vocabulary task is designed to assess your knowledge of the meanings of words you are likely to find in academic texts. You are given a word or phrase and must select the correct definition from a list of options in a dropdown box. **You will have 7 minutes to complete 27 items.**

Below is an example of a question from the Vocabulary task:

The screenshot shows a grey rectangular area containing three numbered questions. Each question has a text label on the left and a dropdown menu on the right. The first two dropdown menus are closed, while the third is open, showing a list of options. The options are: owe, prefer, arrange, learn, seize, and develop. The first option, 'owe', is highlighted with a dark blue background.

1. grow	<input type="text"/>
2. put in order	<input type="text"/>
3. like more than something else	<input type="text"/> owe prefer arrange learn seize develop

Task 2: Timed Reading Task

Time allowed: Practice time + **10 minutes**

In this task you read a text of 73 lines as quickly as you can. Performance on tasks like this one is an indication of your academic English language proficiency (Manning, 1987).

In each line of the text there is an additional word that does not make sense. As you read the text, you click on this word in each line.

You have 10 minutes to work through 73 lines of text. You will be timed out of the task once the 10 minutes have passed.

Below is an example of the instructions and a passage of text from the Timed Reading task:

In the following passage there is a word in each line that does not belong. Click on that word in each line and it will become highlighted. If you change your mind you simply click on another word and that is then the highlighted word. Practise on the text below then check your answers with the passage beneath. The word that you should have highlighted will be in yellow.

Some public libraries have developed ways to personal capture the attention print and interest of younger library patrons. One library in the United Kingdom has space on its website for can teenagers to write book and music reviews you of library materials and they are encouraged to participate from in the development of library collections.

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What happens after the Screening?

You will be emailed the outcome of your Screening generally within 24 hours of taking the assessment. There are **three possible outcomes**.

- If your Screening outcome indicates that **no further DELNA assessment is needed**, you will receive helpful links for support with academic English language skills. This means you are expected to further develop your academic literacy independently.
- If your Screening outcome indicates that **no further DELNA assessment is required**, you will be directed to English language enrichment options online and on campus. We strongly advise that you enhance your academic English language skills by engaging with online resources and participating in workshops.
- If the outcome of your Screening assessment demonstrates that **further assessment is required**, then you will need to book for the DELNA Diagnosis. The Diagnosis will assess your academic English language skills more fully so that the DELNA team can advise you appropriately.

Step 2: The DELNA Diagnosis

The Diagnosis consists of three tasks: Reading, Listening and Writing. They are all timed.

Reading Task

Time allowed: 40–50 minutes (it varies according to the version you take).

There will be two reading passages in the Reading assessment. The combined length of the two texts is approximately 1,200 words. The texts will be on a topic of general interest that does not require specialist subject knowledge. You are asked to answer a variety of questions which assess what you have understood. A range of question types is used, including cloze, summarising, matching ideas, information transfer, multiple choice, true/false and short answer. Examples of most of these question types appear below under the heading “Diagnosis Task Examples”.

In the reading task, you are being assessed on the following skills:

- ability to read quickly
- ability to find specific information
- ability to locate causes and effects, sequences, contrasts
- ability to distinguish between main points and evidence or supporting ideas
- ability to select words which fit the meaning and the grammatical structure of the text (cloze)
- ability to summarise main topics
- ability to draw a conclusion based on information in a passage
- ability to distinguish between fact and opinion
- ability to reorganise information in a passage in another way (e.g., insert it in a chart, graph, map or diagram)

NB:

1. If you find you are using far too much time for a certain section, leave it and move on to the rest of the questions. You can return to it if you finish the other sections early.

2. It is important to read the questions before you read the text. If you do this, you will know what information to look for.

Listening Task

Time allowed: 30 minutes

You will hear a mini-lecture on a topic of general interest that requires no specialist knowledge. A brief introductory reading passage will help you get an idea of the topic before the lecture begins. The lecture is divided into four sections. You will have time to read through the relevant questions before listening to each section of the lecture. You will be told to write your answers as you listen to the lecture and you will also have time after each section to review your answers.

In the listening test, you will be assessed on your ability to:

- locate and recall specific or key information
- reorganise information from the lecture to complete a graph or chart or diagram
- summarise main points
- distinguish between main points and supporting detail

Academic Writing Tasks

Short Writing (for non-doctoral students)

Time allowed: 30 minutes

In the short writing task you are given information in a table or diagram and asked to produce between 200 and 250 words of commentary. There will be specific instructions to guide you in commenting about particular aspects of the information given.

This kind of task shows whether you are able to write in a way that will be acceptable to your lecturers and tutors in your university courses.

This piece of writing is assessed against a number of criteria including:

A. *Fluency*

One aspect of fluency is coherence. This refers to how easily a reader can understand what you have written. It means that you need to think about how to organise your writing clearly. You should start with an introduction, followed by information and ideas presented in a clear structured way, and finish with a conclusion.

Another aspect of fluency is the cohesion of the writing. This refers to the way the different sentences are connected to each other, for example, by using linking words/ phrases such as *however, on the other hand, therefore*.

The final aspect of your writing that is assessed in this category is academic style. This is writing in a formal way, avoiding colloquial language, personal references, and abbreviations.

B. Content

This refers to the accurate description, interpretation of the data provided and the development of ideas pertinent to the topic. When reading your data description, the reader should be able to visualise the table or diagram. The key aspects of the data should be explained, and your ideas should be relevant and well supported.

C. Grammar and Vocabulary

The first aspect considered is the variety and complexity of the sentence structures you use; their accuracy (correctness) and their appropriateness will be assessed. Grammatical accuracy is evaluated, as is the range of vocabulary. Spelling is considered but is not the main focus.

Long Writing (for doctoral candidates only)

Time allowed: 70 minutes

In the long writing you are presented with two texts to read; these are on a topic of general interest and they express opposing views on that topic.

The long writing for doctoral candidates comprises two writing tasks: a summary of the two source texts, and an academic essay.

In Task 1, the summary, you are asked to identify the key points from the two contrasting texts and summarise them in your own words. Your summary must be accurate and within the word limit (about 150 words).

In Task 2, the essay, you are asked to write on a given topic related to the material in the two texts.

In your essay, you should express a clear point of view and support it with a logical development of your own ideas and an appropriate conclusion. You may refer to ideas in the source texts to build your argument.

An effective response will contain about 250–300 words and will be assessed on the following criteria:

- organisation
- academic style
- quality of discussion
- sentence structure
- grammar
- vocabulary

NB: For both the Short and the Long Writing, your work will be marked independently by two trained and experienced raters. If they disagree, a senior member of the DELNA team will make the final decision.

Diagnosis Task Examples

Below are some examples of the tasks you will do as part of the DELNA Diagnosis.

Task Example 1: Reading Task

Example 1 (multiple choice)

A section of the text reads as follows:

Until the early 1970s, no one cared about energy conservation. Very few knew what it meant. This apathy was caused by apparently ever-increasing quantities of fuel available at decreasing prices. However, the western world was suddenly jolted into reality by the “OPEC oil crisis”, which clarified many of the reasons for bothering with energy conservation.

Question: The “OPEC oil crisis”

- A. made westerners aware of the need for energy conservation.
- B. increased westerners’ apathy about energy conservation.
- C. made more fuel available at lower prices.
- D. caused the western world to reject high fuel prices.

Answer: A

Example 2 (short answer)

A section of the text reads as follows:

Political leaders and the media often express concern about the possibility of cuts in oil supplies due to political unrest in the Middle East. When this is coupled with Australia’s dwindling local oil reserves, then clearly the longer we can make our present reserves last the less vulnerable we will be to external conflicts in the future.

Question: What two factors may affect Australia’s oil supply?

- Answer:
1. political unrest in the Middle East
 2. dwindling local oil reserves

Example 3 (cloze)

A section of the text reads as follows:

We should also try to reduce our dependence on local energy sources such as gas and electricity. For example, a person who lives in a well-insulated house with solar water heating will be less inconvenienced by power restriction than other people while someone who lives close to work, shops and other facilities will never be affected by disruptions to transport services. Someone who walks or rides a bicycle never needs to worry about petrol supplies.

Question:

Below is a summary of the passage. Select appropriate words from the box to complete the summary and write the corresponding letter in the numbered space to the right. Note that there are more words given than you will need. Each word may be used once only.

Your answers:

If you(1).... your house and(2).... solar water heating, problems with the power supply will(3).... you less than others.(4).... non-motorised forms of transport also avoids problems(5).... with transport and fuel disruptions.

1.K.... 2.G....
3.F....
4.E....
5.B....

B	associated	I	sell
C	avoid	J	caused
D	convenience	K	insulate
E	using	L	affected
F	inconvenience	M	together
G	install	N	driving

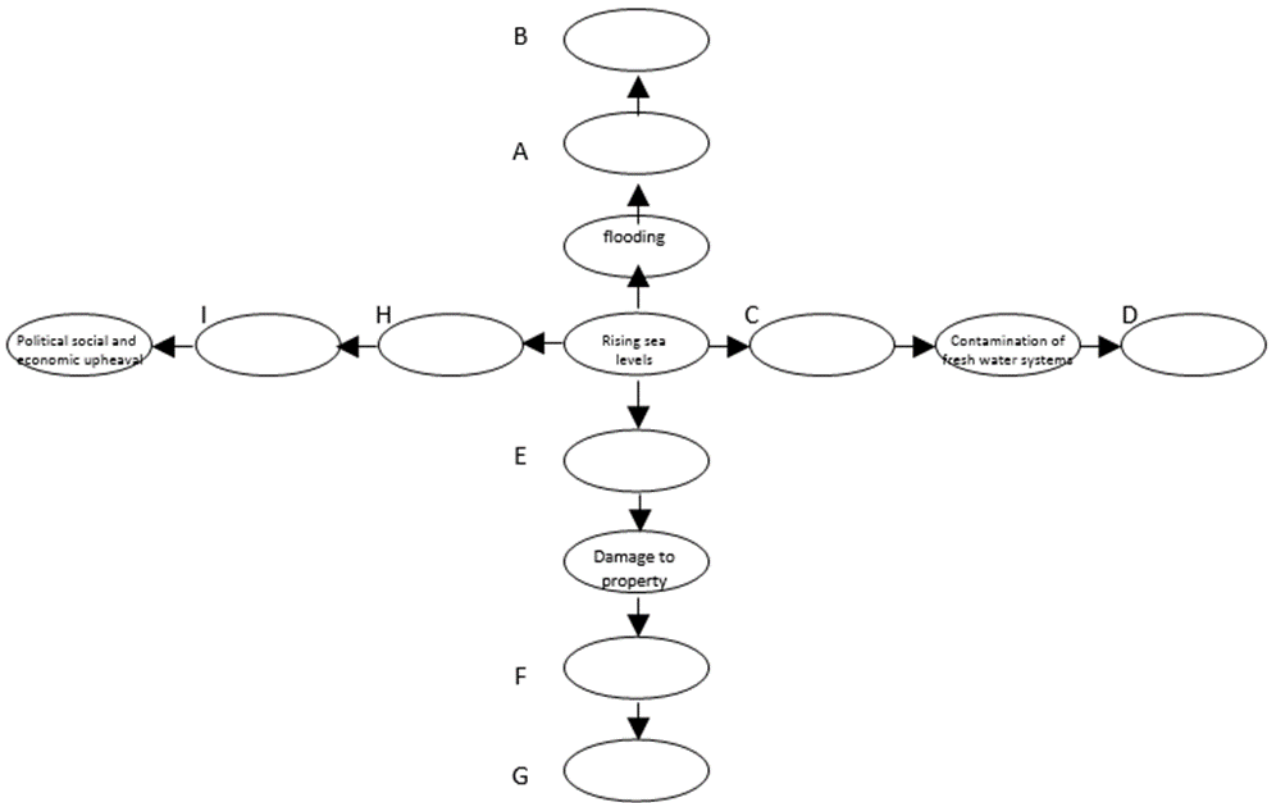
NB:

You will sometimes be asked to find the words in the text yourself, i.e., they will not be given to you as they are in this example.

Example 4

Read the following passage and then fill in the blank shapes with information from the text on events that occur as a consequence of rising sea levels. Note that the most direct consequences should be shown in the ovals closest to the central oval. Answers are provided at the bottom of the page.

The consequences of the greenhouse effect will be far reaching. The many disastrous consequences of climatic change and rising sea levels will go far beyond the immediate effects. For example, crop losses due to flood in one part of Australia will affect food prices throughout the country. Damage to property due to coastal changes will lead to the lack of homes and land, and will eventually affect real estate prices. Rivers and irrigation systems will be 'contaminated' by salt water moving up streams and crops will fail. The mass movement of millions of people from flooded countries will have major political, social and economic consequences for countries not directly affected by rising seas.



Answers to Example 4, Reading:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|---------------------------------|
| A. | Crop losses | F. | Lack of homes and land |
| B. | Rising food prices | G. | Rise in prices |
| C. | Salt water moves upstream | H. | Flooding of low-lying countries |
| D. | Crops fail | I. | Mass movement of people |
| E. | Coastal changes | | |

Task Example 2: Listening Task

Example 1 - You hear a section of the lecture as follows:

“ . . . Community health proponents argue that to prevent ill health and promote good health it is necessary for a community health centre to be concerned about the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community, as well as about disease diagnosis and treatment . . . ”

Question: What are the two basic aims of the community health programmes?

- Answer: 1. to prevent ill health
2. to promote good health

Example 2 - You hear a section of the lecture as follows:

“ . . . It is possible to break down the work of community health centres into four broad categories. First there is primary care – this can include medical, dental, nursing and physiotherapy services. Then there is what we could call social and welfare services, which might include counselling, social work, psychology and youth work. The third category is health education and promotion. This includes providing information and working with people to help them make healthy changes to their lifestyles. The final category can be called community work or community development and tries to build up community organisations and networks and to address social isolation and alienation. It seeks to empower and resource local people, local organisations and wider networks . . . ”

Question: What are the four broad categories into which the work of community health care centres can be divided? The first answer is given to help you.

- Answer: 1. **primary care**
2. social and welfare service
3. health education and promotion
4. community work

Example 3 - You hear a section of the lecture as follows:

“ . . . As I’ve indicated, there are lots of ways in which people from very diverse backgrounds can work in the community health sector. These would not only be health practitioners but also people whose backgrounds are in social and welfare work, community development, health education and administration. The one key prerequisite would be sympathy with the principles of community health . . . ”

Question: What characteristic must all people involved with community health have?

Answer: Sympathy with its principles.

Example 4 – You hear a section of the lecture as follows:

“ . . . There is no broad agreement about the legitimacy and value of the community health approach and so there is a lack of broad support within the political parties, with policy makers within the health professions and the health bureaucracies for the community health sector. For this reason, the sector remains small and a relatively minor component of both the public health and broader health systems . . . ”

Statement: The community health sector is relatively small because:

- a) it is not legitimate.
- b) the health sector groups disagree about its importance.
- c) there are conflicting opinions amongst the public at large about it.
- d) there is a lack of consensus about its value.

Answer: d) there is a lack of consensus about its value.

Task Example 3: Short Academic Writing (for non-doctoral students)

You have 30 minutes to do this task. You should write between 200 and 250 words. All sections are of equal importance.

Tourism in New Zealand

The graph below shows the number of tourists arriving in New Zealand from 1983 to 2007.

Write an **academic essay** in which you will:

- Describe the information given in the graph.

THEN

- Suggest reasons for the trends.

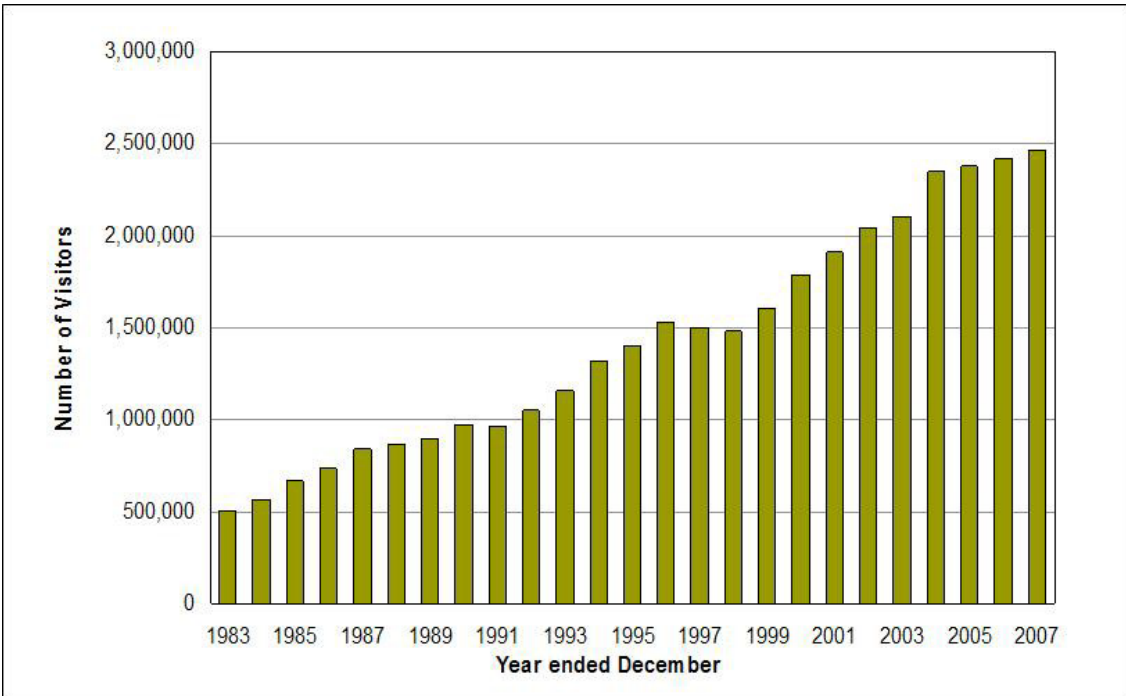
AND

Either

- Discuss the impact of tourism on the economy and the environment in New Zealand.

Or

- Discuss the impact of tourism on the economy and environment in your own country.



NZ Government Statistics

Some interesting facts:

1991: First year of the New Zealand Tourism Board (an organisation to promote tourism in New Zealand)

1997: Asian financial crisis

1999: Clean Green New Zealand promotion by the New Zealand Tourism Board

2004: Fast economic growth in China

Task Example 4: Long Academic Writing (for doctoral candidates)

You have 70 minutes to complete these TWO tasks.

Task 1: Summary (about 150 words)

Read through the two texts on the topic of international students in New Zealand and, in your own words, summarise the key arguments in the texts in one paragraph of approximately 150 words.

NB: You should spend 20–25 minutes on this task.

Task 2: Essay (250–300 words)

Write an argumentative essay in about 250 – 300 words in response to the following statement:

“The practice of encouraging international students to study in New Zealand is beneficial to this country.”

You may choose to either agree or disagree with the statement. In your essay, you may refer to ideas in the source texts to support your arguments, but you must also include your own ideas. You should establish a clear point of view, and support it with a logical development and an appropriate conclusion.

NB: You should spend 40–45 minutes on this task.

Text 1

A 2015 report by Education New Zealand’s Chief Executive John Goulter stressed the importance of encouraging international students to study in New Zealand. The report stated that the increasing international student numbers increased the value of the country’s fifth largest export industry by \$258 million dollars in the previous year.

Goulter maintained that international education is vital to strengthening New Zealand’s connections with the world by establishing personal networks, supporting interaction with highly skilled people and introducing our own young people to global perspectives. In his view, every student who comes to New Zealand takes an unforgettable experience home with them and raises the profile of this country in communities in all corners of the world.

The rise in international student enrolments also saw a corresponding increase in the number of jobs in related industries – an increase of more than 2,000 jobs in the sector which now supports 30,000 jobs across New Zealand. Goulter therefore perceives it as a major industry in terms of the jobs it creates and the export earnings. In his view the economic benefits are clear; from tuition fees, accommodation and day-to-day living costs, to the dollars spent on experiencing all New Zealand has to offer, international students bring a valuable boost to the economy. Moreover, since New Zealand’s postgraduate population was somewhat thin, with an increase in these international students researching technology, especially science and engineering, it was important to encourage them to stay in New Zealand so that it would be the New Zealand economy and culture that would benefit from their ideas and inventiveness.

Based on NZ Herald 26/01/2015

Text 2

Winston Peters, a well-known New Zealand politician, criticized the number of foreign students choosing to study in New Zealand, saying the increase is probably due to incentives such as permanent residency.

Mr Peters said the number of international students choosing to study in New Zealand is spiralling, thanks to incentives being offered beyond the visa rules. He believes the government’s softening of restrictions, by allowing foreign students to

work, is pushing the numbers to unacceptable levels. Mr Peters added that students are being 'sold' the student visa as a pathway to permanent residency.

Mr Peters was responding to the Independent Tertiary Institutions' chairman, Feroz Ali, who had earlier claimed in a Radio New Zealand interview that the right incentives were in place for attracting students to New Zealand. In his response, Mr Peters took issue with the right of overseas students to gain job-seeker visas. He said many of these students were behind counters in supermarkets and working in service stations. He claimed that New Zealand workers now face more unfair competition for jobs, which are not plentiful. He cited the high official unemployment rate and said about a quarter of young Maori and Pasifika do not have a job. He felt student visas should not be used to flood the job market, drive down wages and undermine conditions, and increase the already record number of permanent immigrants.

NZ Herald 29/01/2015

Useful resources

If you have had little experience with academic writing, you may find the following resources useful:

[Write@uni](#)

An interactive resource that covers expectations of writing at university and the importance of critical thinking, effective reading, and writing with purpose.

[Summarising Skills](#)

A guide to help you understand summarising in academic writing.

Step 3: Meeting the DELNA Language Adviser

Approximately 10 days after taking the Diagnosis, you will receive an email from the DELNA office. The email may ask you to schedule an appointment with one of the DELNA language advisers.

In your meeting with the DELNA Language Adviser, your Diagnosis results will be discussed and you will be advised on the most appropriate form of support — should you require it.

Your Diagnosis results are reported in DELNA bands. The bands are summarised below.

DELNA bands

Bands 8 & 9: Proficient or highly proficient user

Recommendation: No support required. Unlikely to experience difficulties with academic English.

A typical student at this level:

- reads efficiently and with ease, extracting and synthesising both abstract and factual information from linguistically complex texts, even when these are not on familiar topics;
- can understand, recall and synthesise key points and supporting details in an academic lecture delivered at native speed;
- produces an essay which is clearly presented and well developed and which uses a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriately, with no significant errors in word formation or spelling.

Band 7: Independent user

Recommendation: English is satisfactory and no support is required. The student may, nevertheless, benefit from further practice in one or more skill areas.

A typical student at this level:

- can read and interpret most important information in academic texts, with only occasional lapses in understanding;
- understands and extracts nearly all the relevant information from an academic lecture, but may experience difficulty when required to synthesise a number of pieces of information delivered at native speed;
- produces a fluent and generally coherent essay which causes only slight or occasional strain for the reader. Errors are few and unobtrusive and the writer shows adequate command of vocabulary and uses an appropriate range of sentence structures.

Band 6: Adequate user

Recommendation: English is somewhat satisfactory. The student would be advised to seek concurrent support in one or more skill areas.

A typical student at this level:

- can generally understand academic texts but may take some time to draw out the necessary information or to interpret parts of the text, particularly those which are linguistically complex or deal with abstract ideas;
- can understand most of the content of an academic lecture delivered at native speed but may be a little slow to process meaning and may sometimes have difficulty distinguishing main points from supporting detail;
- produces a mainly satisfactory piece of writing but some strain may be caused by misuse or absence of cohesive devices, grammatical errors or vocabulary limitations which cause problems in expression of ideas. Some points may appear irrelevant.

Band 5: Limited user

Recommendation: May be at risk with academic study due to limited English skills. Needs intensive English language support.

A typical student at this level:

- reads academic texts with difficulty. May be able to get the gist but important concepts/information may be misunderstood or overlooked;
- has considerable difficulty following an academic lecture delivered at native speaker speed and may misinterpret or draw wrong conclusions from what is said;
- expresses basic ideas in writing but uses a limited variety of sentence structures and cohesive devices are inadequate, inappropriate or absent. Basic grammatical errors are noticed, vocabulary is restricted, and spelling errors and poor word formation may cause strain for the reader.

Band 4: Very limited user

Recommendation: Is likely to be at severe risk of academic failure due to inadequate English. Needs intensive English language support.

A typical student at this level:

- reads very slowly and has difficulty extracting meaning from academic prose or following a line of argument due to inadequate knowledge of English vocabulary and grammar;
- is unable to extract key information contained in an academic lecture or to interpret its meaning;
- produces writing which is incoherent and hard to interpret. Few sentence patterns are used correctly. Vocabulary is limited and poor word choice often inhibits expression. Spelling errors are frequent.



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