Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment

Handbook for Candidates

All candidates should read this booklet before the assessment

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

Some students have difficulties in their studies because they have not had experience of the academic English language skills typically needed to succeed at university level. DELNA (Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment) has been introduced at the University of Auckland to identify your language needs and to help you achieve success in your studies. The strengths and weaknesses in your academic English language identified by the assessment will be reported to you in the form of a written profile. If one or more of your skills needs improvement then you will be guided to the appropriate language support for you.

DELNA

- Will not cost you anything
- Will not exclude you from the courses you are enrolled in
- Will not appear on your academic record
- Will help identify your strengths and weaknesses in academic English
- Will give you feedback about your academic English skills at the very beginning of your studies
- Will help us guide you to the most appropriate English language support
- Will show your Faculty the areas where you may need help.

About the Assessment . . .
DELNA covers the academic language skills in reading, listening and writing needed for university-level courses of study. The assessment is made up of six tasks. Not all students will do all tasks. Sample questions are provided in this booklet. The tasks include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>7 minutes</td>
<td>(see page 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed Reading</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>(see page 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td>(see pages 8-11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>(see pages 12-13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>(see page 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Writing</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>(see page 15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What the Assessment Contains: Screening and Diagnosis

SCREENING

Vocabulary  Time allowed: Practice time + 7 minutes

This task is designed to assess your knowledge of the meanings of words you are likely to come across in academic texts. You are given definitions and have to match these with words of a similar meaning. You will have just seven minutes to complete all 27 items.

Speed Reading  Time allowed: Practice time + 10 minutes

In this task you are given a text that has been "doctored" to include an additional word in each line. You are asked to speed read the text and circle/click on the word in each line "that does not belong". The text is on a topic of general academic English and you have 10 minutes to work through 73 lines.

If the results of your screening assessment suggest that you may need language support as you begin your studies, then you will be offered the diagnostic assessment.

DIAGNOSIS

Reading  Time allowed: approximately 45 minutes

There will be one or two reading passages in your assessment booklet. The total length of the texts is approximately 1,200 words. They are 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 “Sample Questions”.

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

• speed
• 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 construction 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 in chart, graph, map, diagram).

(If you have any difficulty in understanding what these skills mean, first try the sample questions, then, if necessary, consult a teacher of English.)
Please note:
You will not be permitted to take more than the time allocated for the Reading subtest. If you find you are using far too much time for a certain section, leave it and go on to the rest of the paper. You can return to it if you finish the other sections early.

NB: 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  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 write your answers as you listen to the lecture and you will also have time after each section to complete them.

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  Time allowed: 30 minutes
In this writing task you are presented with information in a table or diagram and asked to produce a page of commentary. Instructions which ask you to comment on particular aspects of the information given, guide you in your thinking. You have 30 minutes to complete this task.

A task of this nature, which assesses the ability to understand and interpret information, is generally regarded as a key component of academic literacy.

The report is assessed against a number of criteria. These include:

A. Fluency
One aspect of fluency is the cohesion of the writing. This is the way the parts of the writing relate to each other. Another aspect of fluency is coherence. This is the way the writing makes sense for the reader, and involves careful, clear organisation. Fluency also refers to the amount of difficulty the reader experiences in understanding the meaning that the writer is attempting to communicate.

B. Content
This refers to the accurate description and interpretation of the data and the ideas put forward. Ideas should be relevant and well supported.

C. Grammar and Vocabulary
The range of vocabulary and sentence structures you use, their accuracy and their appropriateness will be looked at. Spelling is looked at, but is not the main focus.

Note: Most diagnostic assessments are made up of the reading, listening and 30-minute writing tasks, but some courses require students to do the longer writing task. You would be advised of this before you enrolled for the assessment.
**Academic Writing - an argument**  Time allowed: 40 minutes

In this writing task you are given a series of short extracts from a number of written sources that present differing viewpoints about a particular topic. Drawing on this information you are asked to present and support an argument with respect to the given topic. You should write at least 300 words and you are given 40 minutes to complete the task.

This essay requires that you express more than one side of an argument, though you may show that you favour one side in particular. A short reading passage or set of passages provides some input for ideas. Information from these passages may be used, but you are also encouraged to contribute your own ideas and opinions. You are allowed five minutes for reading, and 35 minutes for writing. In the test booklet, a space is provided for you to make notes. These notes are not assessed.

This piece of writing is assessed against a number of criteria. These include:

**A. Fluency**

One aspect of fluency is the cohesion of the writing. This is the way the parts of the writing relate to each other. Another aspect of fluency is coherence. This is the way the writing makes sense for the reader, and involves careful, clear organisation. Fluency also refers to the amount of difficulty the reader experiences in understanding the meaning that the writer is attempting to communicate.

**B. Content**

This refers to the ideas used in the writing. In this essay, ideas should be clearly related to one or the other side of the argument and to each other. Clear distinctions should be made between main ideas and evidence to support these ideas. There should also be progression: the argument should move from one point to another and arrive at some conclusion.

**C. Grammar and Vocabulary**

The range of vocabulary and sentence structures you use, their accuracy and their appropriateness will be looked at. Spelling is looked at, but is not the main focus.

*Penalties:*

Points will be deducted if you use large sections of the reading texts in your writing without significantly changing the expression of these. You can, however, quote small portions of the readings or use individual words and expressions.
Sample Questions: Screening

Please note that the examples below are not from the actual test.

A. Vocabulary

You must choose the right word to go with each meaning, as shown below.

Fill the circle for the letter that corresponds to the correct word for each meaning.

Here is an example.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
A & B & C & D & E & F \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
a. pretend & c. parade & e. link \\
b. bellow & d. raid & f. emergency
\end{array}
\]

You answer it the following way.

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
A & B & C & D & E & F \\
0 & 0 & ● & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & ● & 0 & 0 \\
0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & ● & 0 \\
a. pretend & c. parade & e. link \\
b. bellow & d. raid & f. emergency
\end{array}
\]

NB: You may do this assessment online. In that case you will click on a pop-up menu next to the word and then click on the word from the pop-up menu that matches it.
B. **Speed Reading**

In the following passage there is a word in each line that does not belong. Circle that word in each line and then check your answers with the passage beneath. The word that you should have circled will be in bold print.

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 in the development of library collections from.

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 in the development of library collections **from**.

**NB:** *You may do this task online. In this case you will click on the word that does not belong and that is highlighted. If you change your mind you simply click on another word which then becomes the highlighted word.*
Sample Questions: Diagnosis

A. Reading
You will have 45 minutes to do this 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 make Australia vulnerable to outside events?

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. And 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.

Q: 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>depend</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>associated</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>avoid</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>convenience</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>using</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>inconvenience</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>install</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>protect</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>sell</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>caused</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>insulate</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>affected</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>together</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>driving</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 top of page 11.

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 costal 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.
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Crop losses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Rising food prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Salt water moves upstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Crops fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Coastal changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Lack of homes and land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>Rise in prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>Flooding of low-lying countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>Mass movement of people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. **Listening**

You will have 30 minutes to do this 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 be concerned about disease diagnosis and treatment…”

Q: What are the two basic aims of the community health programs?

A: 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 and 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….”

Q: 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.

A: 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....”

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

A: 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....”

Q: 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

A: d)
C. **Academic Writing – 30 minutes**

You will have 30 minutes to do this task. You should write between 1-1 ½ pages; at least 200 words).

**Task**

The graph below shows the number of people attending places of entertainment in a New Zealand city of 600,000 people between 1985 and 2000.

With reference to the graph

Describe the changes in people’s choice of places of entertainment over that time, and either:

(a) Explain why the changes may have come about

Or

(b) Compare the situation with that in the city or town that you come from.

![Graph showing people attending places of entertainment in a New Zealand city 1985-2000](chart.png)
D. **Academic Writing** - 40 minutes: an argument

You will have 40 minutes to do this task, 5 minutes reading and 35 minutes to write your answer

Below are some statements about **issues surrounding the present-day Olympic Games**. Spend about five minutes reading and considering them. Then write an essay in response to the following question:

**“Do the present-day Olympic Games live up to the Olympic ideals of ‘friendship, fairplay, glory, honour and peace’ as represented by the five Olympic rings?”**

You may use ideas contained in these statements, but DO NOT COPY phrases from them. You should also add ideas of your own. You should write at least 300 words – approximately two pages.

---

The man who revived the Olympics at the end of the 19th Century, Baron de Courbetin, insisted that education of the public in the spirit of fair play, and the importance of taking part rather than winning, were just as important as the Games themselves.


---

Corporate sponsorship concentrates on the richest countries’ athletes. The United States, for example, benefits from huge funding for its team and can thus train them to far higher levels than developing countries.


---

With only days before the 2000 Olympics in Sydney... allegations of corruption flew, as headlines decried cheating athletes using performance-enhancing drugs—and pointed accusingly at an ineffective policing system influenced by high-stakes corporate sponsorships and stop-at-nothing nationalistic pride.


---

…the Olympics provide a rare and important opportunity for the world to unite for two weeks or so.


---

…the patriotism so many fans and athletes display works against the idea of unity. How can we be united when we pay so much attention to which countries have won medals?

*Sample Synthesis-Response Essay #2 www.esl.ohio-state.edu*

---

…by seeing so many nations and cultures represented during the competition, people see how richly diverse the world is, and this creates a sense of hope and pride.

*Bartok, B. (2000) Have the Games Outlived Their Value? Newsweek, October 2000*
PROFILES

Profiles describing your skill level, in terms of bands, are sent to you approximately eight days after you have done DELNA. Below is the summary of the band descriptors:

SUMMARY BAND DESCRIPTIONS

Bands 8 & 9: Proficient or highly proficient user
Recommendation: No support required. Unlikely to experience any difficulties with academic English.

A typical student at this level:
• reads efficiently and with ease, extracting and synthesizing both abstract and factual information from linguistically complex texts, even when these are not on familiar topics;
• can understand, recall and synthesize 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. May nevertheless benefit from further practice in one or other skill area.

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 synthesize 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 unintrusive and writer shows adequate command of vocabulary and uses an appropriate range of sentence structures.

Band 6: Adequate user
Recommendation: English is mainly satisfactory but 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.

Catherine Elder & Janet von Randow, August 2002

Information for candidates –
You can book your assessment on line: www.delna.auckland.ac.nz/booking/

If your course has asked you to do the assessment look for the session under Group and your course name, e.g., Mgt101, Asian100, FTVMS100, etc.

Otherwise book under General.

You need your ID to book and you are advised to use your university email address (your netID@ec.auckland.ac.nz) as this ensures that your results reach you.
When you come to the assessment

- You should have your ID number with you.
- You should arrive at the room at least 10 minutes before the scheduled time.
- For the diagnostic assessment you must have a pen with you.
- You will not be able to use dictionaries.
- The invigilator will answer all your questions in the assessment room.
- The invigilator will ask you to make sure that your cellphone is switched off.
- Each task is timed. You will have practice time for both tasks in the screening assessment, but you will not have extra time for any task in the diagnostic assessment.
- Direct questions after the assessment to the DELNA office. Either email delna@auckland.ac.nz or ring 373 7599 ext 82427.

Results from the screening should be emailed to you within 24 hours.

Results from the diagnostic assessment should be emailed within approximately eight days.

If you do not receive your results then please email the DELNA office: delna@auckland.ac.nz so that we can get them to you as quickly as possible.

DELNA Academic English Language Adviser
You may receive an email asking you to make an appointment to come in to collect your DELNA profile from our Academic English Language Adviser. She will discuss your profile with you and make sure that you get the very best advice about how you can improve your language skills while you are studying.

Students said they wanted someone they could talk to about their language profile, and we are very pleased to have been able to appoint our Language Adviser. Do make the most of this opportunity to get your own individual advice.

Phone: 373 7599  ext 88959
Email: delna@auckland.ac.nz

If you are able to follow the advice for further language support given to you on your DELNA profile, you will find that your language proficiency increases. The quicker that happens, the quicker you are able to take part with confidence in the tutorials and seminars in your courses and the better your assignments and course work will become.