

## **Assessing the entry-level English literacy skills of a group of first year business students: just how much diversity is there?**

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A desire to have concrete data on the literacy standards of students led staff in the School of Information Systems in the Curtin Business School (CBS) to design a task to assess the English literacy entry levels of students. We were particularly interested to gauge whether there was much difference between the literacy levels of international and local students, males and females, and mature age entrants and school leavers.

Staff from the School of IS working with colleagues from the CBS Communication Skills Centre (the language and study skills support unit of the Division) worked together to design a diagnostic assessment task based on the unit Information Systems 100. A six-point scale (which takes into account a variety of other existing language scales) was developed to assess the writing of some 600 students.

This paper describes how the task was designed, administered and assessed and presents a brief analysis of the findings. It also describes some other unintended effects of implementing such a project. The results of this project should be of interest to academic staff and also to those involved in the evaluation of English language entry criteria for university admission.

**Key words: tertiary literacy, literacy assessment, tertiary English**