

DEAR PROSPECTIVE FIRST YEAR STUDENT

COMPULSORY ACADEMIC LITERACY TESTING

All students enrolled in their first year of study at the North-West University (NWU) must write a compulsory placement test in academic literacy. The student has the freedom of choice to write this test in either English or Afrikaans. The tests or instruments used at the NWU are the Test of Academic Literacy Levels (TALL) and the Toets van Akademiese Geletterdheidsvlakke (TAG).

WHY?

Insufficient literacy skills are detrimental to students in reaching their full academic potential and finishing their studies in the allotted time. The NWU, therefore, decided to act in your best interest by establishing your academic literacy level early on in order to come to informed decisions when allocating you to a suitable intervention programme.

WHERE AND WHEN?

The tests are written during the welcoming programme which takes place approximately two or three weeks prior to the commencement of academic classes. As soon as you arrive on campus, you will receive more information about this from staff, the academic representative of your residence's house committee, or the curriculum advisors of the faculty when you arrive on campus. The NWU-Puk guide also contains information regarding the academic literacy tests.

WHAT DOES THE TEST MEASURE?

These tests measure a variety of competencies in academic literacy and you can expect to be tested on the following:

- an extensive comprehension of vocabulary used in a variety of academic contexts;
- the interpretation and usage of metaphoric and idiomatic language, as well as sub-textual meaning, word play and ambiguity;
- comprehension of relations between different parts of a text, consciousness of the logical development of an (academic) text from introduction to conclusion, and knowledge of the language used to coherently bind the different parts of a text together;
- the understanding and interpretation of different text types and genres including sensitivity and awareness for the meaning transferred, as well as the intended audience;
- the analysis, usage and creation of graphics and visual information;
- distinguishing between significant and irrelevant information, facts and opinions, statements and arguments, cause and effect, and the logical classification and organisation of data used for comparisons;
- the identification of sequence and order, along with basic numeric calculations related to academic data, which could be used to formulate an argument in the academic context;
- knowledge of what qualifies as evidence for an argument and the ability to make inferences and draw conclusions, and to extrapolate from these and its implications and be able to apply them to other contexts;
- understanding the communicative function of various linguistic expressions in academic language such as explanation, providing examples, argumentation and defining; and
- the ability to search for meaning (of an academic text for example) outside the boundaries of the sentence, as well as comparison of one part of a text with another, and one text with another.

PREPARATION?

You cannot prepare for the test. However, it is a challenging test. It is, therefore, necessary that you get enough sleep the night before writing the test. We suggest that you visit the following website for samples of the test: <http://icelda.sun.ac.za>

HOW DO THE RESULTS WORK?

The result of the test is indicated with a code: Code 1, Code 2, Code 3, Code 3G, Code 4 or Code 5. Students with Codes 1-3 should follow AGLA 111/AGLE 111. Students with Codes 4-5 should, dependent on the faculty where they are registered, follow certain modules. Students with a Code 3G are eligible for a second testing opportunity. All students, regardless of the code, should follow AGLA 121/AGLE 121 – it is a prerequisite for obtaining a degree. The test results are usually available three days after writing the test. Certain staff members, the academic representative of your residence's house committee, or the curriculum advisors of the faculty will be able to tell you where the results are made available.

Note that there is no significant correlation with your matric results and the TALL/TAG result, and in particular not with the results of your language subjects. The courses (see below) are also not necessarily a repetition of school or even university content.

WHAT IMPLICATIONS DO THE TEST RESULTS HAVE FOR YOU?

It is compulsory for all students at the NWU to follow either one or two modules in academic literacy. Whether you have to follow one or two module(s) is determined by your test results (and by the requirements set out by the faculty you are enrolled in). The modules in academic literacy are AGLA/AGLE 111 and AGLA/AGLE 121.

AGLA 111/AGLE 111

This is an introductory course for the development of the academic skills required in a university context. It is offered only in the first semester. If you are required to follow this course, it has to be done during the first semester, followed by AGLA 121/AGLE 121 in the second semester. AGLA 111/AGLE 111 is a prerequisite for AGLA 121/AGLE 121. Further information is available in the NWU-Puk guide, the calendars and study guides.

AGLA 121/AGLE 121

This is an advanced course in academic literacy and is compulsory for all students. This module is offered in both semesters, but you are allowed to register for it only once in a particular academic year. If you also need to register for AGLA 111/AGLE 111, you have to do this in the first semester and AGLA 121/AGLE 121 in the second semester. Some faculties require students who do not take AGLA 111/AGLE 111 to follow another module instead. It is important for you to make sure in which semester you have to follow this module before the academic year starts. Further information is available in the NWU-Puk guide, the calendars and study guides.

PLEASE NOTE: If you are using web registration, you might find that certain information for AGLA 111/AGLE 111 and AGLA 121/AGLE 121 has been marked in grey and is inactive. Do not worry about this – the correct data has already been entered for you.

Enquiries

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