

## 1. Aims

To investigate the nature of the relationship between the PTEA Score Profile and students’ linguistic experience and academic performance in their particular discipline in their first year at university

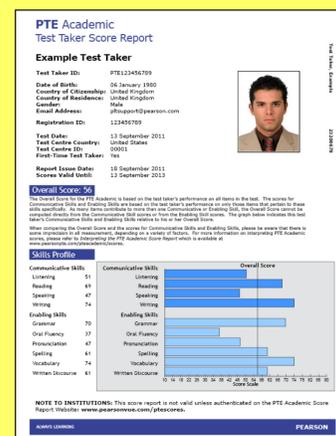
To investigate language support needs in specific case studies

To explore other non-linguistic factors perceived to influence academic performance

# The \*PTE Academic Score Profile and Student Performance at University: Students of ‘The Outer Circle’

\* Full name: Pearson Test of English Academic (referred to as PTEA in my study)

## PTEA Score Report



Source: Interpreting the PTE Academic Score Report  
Pearson Education Ltd (2012b:1)

## 2. Research Questions

1. What is the relationship between the language skills profiles reported by the PTEA and students’ subsequent academic performance as perceived by the students, their EAP tutors and their academic lecturers?
2. What roles do language skills play in academic assignments as perceived by students and academic lecturers?
3. How do students from the outer circle, with an education in the medium of English, cope with the English language requirements of their courses in comparison to their PTEA score profile?
4. What are the specific non-linguistic aspects and experiences of students, that are perceived to influence academic performance at university?

## Funding

- Economic and Social Research Council
- Pearson Education Ltd
- University of Warwick

## 4. Methodology & Data Collection

Case Study approach

Student Tutorials with 4 cases over 3 terms in 4 different institutions

Documentary evidence from progress reports, written work & other genre assignments

Tutor perspectives from interviews & questionnaires

## 3. Concepts

- Readiness (linguistic proficiency) for the linguistic demands of academia
- Reported scores (PTEA Score Report) compared to actual language behaviour or ‘actual experience’ at university conceptualised as: student and tutor perceptions of academic performance in i) academic scenarios or settings and ii) academic assignments (written or spoken)
- Non-linguistic factors contributing to performance such as differences in academic culture and previous professional/academic experience
- Self-assessment using the concept of “rating own language behaviour” (Ingram & Bayliss, 2007) and the CEFR Global Descriptors (2001) linked to PTEA score ranges e.g. PTEA Score range 59-75 (Pearson, 2012a) is estimated to concord with the CEFR as follows:

Level	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Listening	General
B2	<input type="checkbox"/> Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in my field of specialisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	<input type="checkbox"/> Can interact with a degree of oral fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party	<input type="checkbox"/> I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. [Self-assessment p.6]	<input type="checkbox"/> I can follow academic level instruction and participate in academic education, including both coursework and student life.

## 5. Participants

Individuals with PTEA Overall Scores at B2 or B1+ all from a West African English background with education in the medium of English.

#A Dip. pathway to MSc in Business Integrated Management

#B MSc in International Business

#C Dip. pathway to MSc in Petroleum Engineering

#D MSc in Human Resource Management & Training

Student PTEA Scores and concordance with CEFR level compared with student self-assessment (CEFR level choice)

CEFR Level	C1+	B2	B1+	B1	A2	A1
PTE Academic Score Range	76+	59-75	51-58	43-58	30-42	10-29

Students	PTE Ac. Score Profile (Overall Score + Communication Skills)					(Enabling Skills)					
	Overall	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing	Grammar	Oral Fluency	Pronunciation	Spelling	Vocabulary	Written Discourse
#A PTEA CEFR	71 (B2)	71 (B2)	69 (B2)	90 (C2)	65 (B2)	84 (C1)	88 (C2)	90 (C2)	39 (A2)	51 (B1+)	10 (A1)
#A SELF-Assessment	C1+	C1+	B2	C1+	C1+	--	--	--	--	--	--
#B PTEA CEFR	72 (B2)	74 (B2)	73 (B2)	73 (B2)	73 (B2)	63 (B2)	73 (B2)	77 (C1+)	41 (A2)	65 (B2)	90 (C2)
#B 1st SELF-Assessment	C1+	C1+	C1+	B2	C1+	--	--	--	--	--	--
#B 2nd SELF-Assessment	C1+	B2	B1+	B2	C1+	--	--	--	--	--	--
#C PTEA CEFR	61 (B2)	64 (B2)	53 (B1+)	74 (B2)	55 (B1+)	45 (B1)	76 (C1)	71 (B2)	56 (B1+)	62 (B2)	40 (A2)
#C 1st SELF-Assessment	B1+	C1+	B1	B1	B1	--	--	--	--	--	--
#C 2nd SELF-Assessment	C1+	B2	B1+	B1+	B1	--	--	--	--	--	--
#D PTEA CEFR	45 (B1)	52 (B1+)	26 (A1)	49 (B1)	50 (B1)	47 (B1)	51 (B1+)	50 (B1)	61 (B2)	41 (A2)	22 (A1)
#D SELF - Assessment	B2	B1+	B1+	C1+	B2	--	--	--	--	--	--

## Stakeholders

- EAP Tutors/BALEAP
- International Students
- University Admissions
- University Subject Tutors
- Testing Organisations

## Wider Context

- Tests in the marketplace of international education
- UKBA/Home Office Requirements
- Internationalisation/commercialisation of universities and the debate on entry scores

## Outcomes of study

- To inform pre- and in-session support and students’ preparation for university.
- To help students to reflect on their test-taking experience and how it relates to their studies
- To provide qualitative research on a new entry to the language testing arena (PTE Academic)