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Piloting the post-entry language assessment : outcomes from a new system for supporting research candidates with English as an additional language / Liz Tynan & Kellie Johns

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Abstract

The Post-Entry Language Assessment (PELA) was introduced by the James Cook University Graduate Research School in February 2013 as a pilot programme to test a new mechanism for initiating post-enrolment support for research degree candidates who have English as an additional language. Language ability does not necessarily, on its own, predict academic outcomes. Nevertheless, difficulties in expressing research in competent English lead to additional stresses for English-as-an-additional-language research students, particularly in the early stages of candidature. The PELA is a simple academic writing test that diagnoses the writing abilities of incoming international research degree candidates and channels them into relevant personalised support structures. A mixed methods approach was used in this project, in which data were gathered from test and retest scores, while qualitative data were gathered using a questionnaire. This pilot study has helped form the foundation of a responsive, effective and sustainable language and learning support

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model for this diverse student cohort at the university. This system may be useful in other Anglophone universities that enrol higher degree by research candidates from English-as-an-additional-language backgrounds. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)