International postgraduate students' and mature first-time-at-university students' views about academic English writing support after a post-entry assessment

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At the University of Auckland, all first-year students, international or domestic, are required to sit a free assessment called the Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), the aim of which is to identify areas students may need to improve on. Academic writing is one of the three academic language skills that are assessed. DELNA has been used in the Faculty of Education and Social Work of the University for over 10 years as a diagnostic tool gauging academic language needs.

The past decade has seen an increasing number of not only international students but also mature students undertaking postgraduate studies and initial teacher education or social work degrees, respectively, at the University of Auckland. Despite meeting the entry requirements, many still face the challenges of writing confidently in English for academic purposes.

This presentation reports these two groups of students’ views about whether DELNA is an effective tool for them to locate their strengths and weaknesses in academic English writing, and how they view the support available after the assessment.

Learning outcomes
By attending this presentation, participants can expect to:

- Get an idea of the post-entry Diagnostic English Language Needs Assessment (DELNA), which is required for all first year students at the University of Auckland and compulsory for all students beginning a new programme in the Faculty of Education and Social work
- Have a glimpse of an online and face-to-face academic English language support system offered at the Faculty of Education and Social Work with diverse students and diverse student groups; and
- Have a chance to consider the possibility to setting up a similar academic language support system in their own institutions.

Presenters
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Donglan Zhang has been working as a DELNA Language Adviser for 7 years in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland (UOA). Her role is to provide academic language support to students of all programmes, including international postgraduate students. Prior to joining the UOA, she was a lecturer and tutor with the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. Her research interests are in metacognition, language learning strategies, and academic writing.

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Denise McKay has been working as a DELNA Language Adviser for 8 years in the Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Auckland (UOA). Her role is to provide academic language support to students of all programmes, including the initial teacher education programme at the Manukau campus of the University of Auckland. Here the timetable is run between 9 am and 3 pm to facilitate attendance for parents with young children. Prior to joining the UOA, she was a secondary school teacher and adviser to teachers of speakers of languages other than English. Her research interests are in metacognition, language learning strategies, and academic writing.