

## **Research Language Skills Assessment (RLSA)**

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### **1. What is the Research Language Skills Assessment (RLSA)?**

Postgraduate students admitted to research programmes are expected to attain a desired level of language proficiency for their studies at the University.

The **Research Language Skills Assessment (RLSA)** is designed to measure how well research students can write and speak in academic and research-related contexts.

The RLSA is administered by the English Language Centre of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. There are two components in the RLSA: a Written Language Test and a Spoken Language Test.

#### **2. How does the RLSA guide students on English language enhancement?**

The University's English language enhancement provisions include modules and subjects which are relevant to the needs of research postgraduate students. On the basis of the results of the RLSA, recommendations will be made regarding the specific modules or subjects that individual students could take to enhance their English language proficiency for effective written and spoken communication of their research and theses.

#### **3. When should students take the assessment?**

Both full-time and part-time research students admitted after 1 July 2005 are required by the University to sit the RLSA. The assessment is administered by the English Language Centre.

Full-time students should make every effort to complete the assessment within six months of registration for study; and part-time students, within 12 months of registration.

For their own benefit, students are encouraged to take the RLSA as early as possible. The earlier the assessment is taken, the sooner they will be able to enroll in and study the relevant English language enhancement modules and subjects to raise their written and spoken proficiency and develop more effective academic writing and speaking skills for their study. Normally, English language enhancement modules and subjects are offered in Semesters 1 and 2.

#### **4. How often is the assessment administered?**

The RLSA is administered at selected months throughout the academic year. Assessment schedules are available from the Research Office.

## 5. What is the test format?

The two components of the RLSA are as follows.

### **Written Language Test**

Duration: 1 hour

Candidates are required to write a short academic text of 400-450 words on a given topic, based on their general knowledge as well as ideas and information given to them in several extracts from academic sources.

### **Spoken Language Test**

Duration: 5-6 minutes

Candidates are required to give an oral presentation on a given topic related to research contexts.

Candidates will be given a guide sheet that outlines the assessment requirements when they attend the Written Language Test.

At the time of the speaking assessment, candidates need to report to the Centre for Independent Language Learning (CILL) in A305. They could bring one or two of their friends as audience. The presentation will be video-recorded for grading.

## 6. What are the assessment criteria?

The assessment of candidates' written performance is based on three criteria:

- content and organisation
- language: grammar, vocabulary, style and tone
- conventions: layout and format, referencing, and word length

The assessment of candidates' spoken performance is based on four criteria:

- content and organisation
- interaction
- language: grammar, vocabulary, style and tone
- pronunciation and fluency

**7. What is the grading scale for the writing and speaking tests?**

Candidates' performances are rated on a performance band from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest). There is no "pass" or "fail" score in the RLAS.

**8. When can students expect the results of the RLSA?**

Students can expect to receive the results from the Research Office in about three weeks after the test. For details about announcement of test results, please contact the Research Office.

**9. Which English language subjects should students take after the writing and speaking tests?**

The RLSA results show the strengths and weaknesses of students' English language abilities. The Research Office will inform students when the results are ready and give students a web link to check the recommendations made by the English Language Centre. Courses offered by the English Language Centre and the Department of English are also available on this webpage.

**10. Where and how can s/he obtain assistance to prepare for the RLSA?**

The Centre for Independent Language Learning (CILL) of the English Language Centre provides learning materials which cover the range of language skills tested in the RLSA. Information about language enhancement resources in CILL is also available at: <http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL>.