

Navitas

Australia's Largest Provider of Education and Training Uses Versant English Placement Test

Navitas is a leading global education provider that offers an extensive range of educational services to students and professionals, including university programs, creative-media education, professional education, English language training, and settlement services. University Programs is the largest division of Navitas; it prepares international and domestic students for tertiary study through pre-university and university pathway programs. The following case study will describe the challenges and solutions for administering English assessments for over 10,000 university students from 80 countries each year.

“Testing More Than 10,000 Students Annually is a Massive Undertaking”

Navitas had been assessing the English language skills of students seeking an education in an English-speaking country for many years using a customized test. Not only was the test laborious to administer and difficult to scale, but it also lacked the credibility of a third party marking, managing and moderating results. Navitas needed an objective test to satisfy both university partners and parents.

Navitas turned to Pearson to help create an online test that would meet the highest level of excellence for English language testing. When Pearson launched the Versant™ English Placement Test (VEPT) with Navitas in 2011, it was the first globally validated test that assessed the four modalities of English: speaking, listening, reading and writing.

The test, which was built using criteria developed by linguists, evaluates English proficiency using speech processing technology and Pearson's unique implementation of latent semantic analysis. The Versant testing system allows Navitas to conduct assessments around the world, anytime and anywhere. It automatically scores each test, making a detailed score report available within minutes of completion.

Most students considering a university program have taken English classes, but Navitas found that their skills varied widely based on the depth and quality of their English language education. Now, more than 10,000 student recruits take VEPT annually to assess whether their English language proficiency is sufficient to earn direct entry into a Navitas university program or whether they must first attend a pre-sessional English language course.



Versant's reliability and quick results enable students to make informed decisions about their study options quickly. VEPT gives us a competitive advantage every day.”

~ Tony Cullen
Executive General Manager,
Marketing & Sales,
Navitas University Programs



“Testing 10,000 students annually is a massive undertaking,” said Tony Cullen, the Executive General Manager for Marketing & Sales for Navitas University Programs. “But the Versant testing system makes administering the test so efficient that we no longer worry about our ability to scale the effort.”

Pearson Test Meets Highest Standards of Excellence Worldwide

The quality of the test was important to the Navitas academic community, which doubted the impartiality of the previous Navitas English test. Furthermore, the regulatory environment for private higher education providers had become more rigorous, and the process by which Navitas selected students had become more scrutinized, so the reliability of the English assessment results was an imperative.

In order to assure all parties of the accuracy of VEPT, Navitas worked with colleges in the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom and asked them to benchmark VEPT against IELTS and TOEFL. After months of evaluation, those institutions found that Navitas students that were placed using VEPT performed as well in their academic programs as those that were placed with an IELTS or TOEFL test.

“The quality and objectivity of VEPT is critical,” said Cullen. “This is not a Navitas test, and so the students and parents can feel assured that the results are an accurate assessment of their proficiency, on par with IELTS or TOEFL.”

Pearson Test Provides Competitive Advantage for Navitas

Navitas competes with both private and public universities for students. In order to be competitive in this industry, Navitas must maintain a leading sales and marketing program. “We see VEPT as a critical part of our sales toolkit,” said Cullen. “If we have to send students away from our recruiting offices to take the IELTS or TOEFL test, our admission process loses momentum and we are more likely to lose that student.”

According to Cullen, students and parents both like VEPT because unlike IELTS or TOEFL, they don’t have to pay separately for the test, set up a time to take the test, or wait weeks to get their results. The test is securely administered on the spot when a student is in a Navitas recruitment office.

Navitas competitors have their own internal tests, but those results offer no guarantee that students will be able to succeed in an English-speaking classroom. “Versant’s reliability and quick results enable students to make informed decisions about their study options quickly,” said Cullen. “VEPT gives us a competitive advantage every day.”

A Collaborative Partnership with Pearson is Helping Navitas Grow

Based on the excellent recruiting results, Navitas decided to extend its contract with Pearson for three more years. "Pearson is much more than a vendor, they are a collaborative partner," said Cullen. "Using VEPT has enhanced our recruiting efforts across more than 80 countries."

The test has also helped Navitas to adapt to the demands of today's students. "The student profile is much different than even a few years ago. Today's students are more connected. They are mobile. They do more research and shop around. They want everything at their fingertips at all times. Immediacy is key. And that is one of the advantages that we see in VEPT. When a student walks into a Navitas recruiting office, we can test all four of the English language skills and then confidently counsel him or her on the best study pathway to get into a university program."

Cullen concluded, "Navitas' philosophy is underpinned by ensuring students achieve the outcomes they are seeking – good qualifications that will allow them to pursue the career of their choice. A student that is not placed appropriately in an academic program and who struggles with language will probably not make it to graduation. It is not only the student and parent who lose out but also Navitas' reputation as a leading provider of education. For this reason, we see a direct tie between VEPT and the success of Navitas."

About the Versant English Placement Test

VEPT is an English proficiency test that measures reading, writing, speaking and listening skills of individuals whose native language is not English. Universities, private language schools, and corporate training programs around the world use the test to:

- Evaluate a test taker's English communication skills for course placement or exit exam.
- Monitor test taker or employee progress and measure instructional outcomes.
- Benchmark the language levels of students and staff.

VEPT takes only 50 minutes, and results are available online within minutes after the test is completed, allowing for quick, yet accurate placement decisions. Test questions reflect many different situations in the classroom and real world including reading aloud, conversations, and writing summaries and opinion.

To try a sample test or get more information, contact us at:
sales@pearsonkt.com or visit us online at **www.pearson.com/versant**