

**Summary of
Survey Report on English Language Competencies
Expected of University Graduates**

1. Methodology

(a) In-depth interviews with leading establishment(s) (most of which employing between 500 to over 1000 staff members, and in any case not less than 50) in each of the seven major industry sectors in Hong Kong, namely:

- ◆ Manufacturing and Construction
- ◆ Wholesale & Retail trades, and Import & Export trades
- ◆ Restaurants and Hotels
- ◆ Transport, Logistics, Storage and Communications
- ◆ Financing, Insurance and Real Estate
- ◆ Business service
- ◆ Community, Social and Personal Services

(b) Telephone survey with 500 small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs)

2. Findings

2.1 Minimum Levels of English Language Competences Expected of Graduate Employees

- ◆ Large Corporations – range from IELTS 5.5 equivalent to IELTS 7.0 equivalent
- ◆ SMEs – majority of the SMEs surveyed range from IELTS 5.0 equivalent to IELTS 8.0 equivalent, with industry sector average ranging from IELTS 5.78 to IELTS 6.34. Details in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Average Levels of English Language Competences Expected of Graduate Employees, by Industry Sector and by Job Nature

	Customer service & selling	Marketing, business development & planning	Support functions	IT & technical support	Mean
Manufacturing & construction	5.8	6.1	5.6	5.5	5.75
Wholesale & retail trades, and import & export trades	5.8	6.1	5.8	5.6	5.83
Restaurants & hotels	5.7	6.0	5.6	5.5	5.70
Transportation, logistics & storage	6.0	6.2	5.8	6.1	6.03
Communications	n.a.	n.a.	6.3	6.3	6.30
Financing, and insurance & real estate	5.7	5.8	5.5	5.3	5.58
Business service	6.0	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.98
Community, social & personal services	5.7	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.63
Others	5.3	6.4	6.0	6.3	6.00
Mean	5.8	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.78

2.2 Level of Satisfaction with the English Language Competencies of Graduate Employees

2.2.1 Large Corporations Interviewed

- ◆ “With the exception of the insurance and restaurants & hotels sectors, the human resources executives interviewed are in general satisfied with the English language competencies of their entry-level graduate employees because of the relatively thorough screening process adopted at recruitment.”

2.2.2 SMEs Surveyed with Graduate Employees Having Graduated for Less than One Year

Industry Sectors	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	No. of respondents
Manufacturing & Construction	8.3%	66.7%	25.0%	0.0%	12
Wholesale & Retail Trades, Import & Export Trades	1.7%	84.5%	12.1%	1.7%	58
Restaurants & Hotels	0.0%	95.2%	4.8%	0.0%	21
Transport, Logistics & Storage, and Communications	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	5
Financing, Insurance & Real Estate	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	17
Business Service	0.0%	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%	18
Community, Social & Personal Services, and Others	5.9%	70.6%	23.5%	0.0%	17
Overall / Total	2.0%	86.5%	10.8%	0.7%	148

Source:

“Verification Exercise for SCOLAR Project - Specification of English Language Competencies Expected of University Graduates – Final Report”, Hong Kong Policy Research Institute, October 2005

**SCOLAR's Study on English Language Competencies expected of
Local University Graduates Employees**

In June 2003, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) released its Final Report of Language Education Review after months of public consultation and deliberations. It has recommended, inter alia, that “expected English competencies should (also) be specified for university graduates and entry-level professionals to give them a better idea of employers’ expectations.” (Paragraph 2.6.6 (b) of the Final Report refers.) Against this background, a study was launched in September 2003 with results recently concluded and summarised in this report.

2. Invitation to participate in this study was sent to employers of a wide range, including local SMEs and non-SMEs, multinational companies and the Government, to nominate graduate employees for a pilot testing. In the end, a total of 200 graduate employees from various employers (123 of these employees were from employers in the private sector) had been nominated to take the IELTS test between late April and July 2004. A summary of the test results are as follows (apply to the employees from the private sector participating in the pilot test)–

IELTS Score	Distribution (%)
5.5	18 (14.6%)
6.0	28 (22.8%)
6.5	32 (26.0%)
7.0	26 (21.1%)
7.5	11 (8.94%)
8.0	4 (3.25%)
8.5	3 (2.44%)
9.0	1 (0.81%)
Total	123 (100%)