

# Combining ELSA and LPCAT: Selecting students for Tertiary studies

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*The combination of ELSA and LPCAT has been used by Sasol in their national recruitment of bursary candidates in Engineering for the past 8 years. It has proven to be a powerful combination in the prediction of academic success.*



Where ELSA assesses the English literacy ability and numeracy skills level of a candidate to determine if the individual will cope with academic studies at the proposed level in the medium of English, LPCAT determines the non-verbal figural based learning potential of a candidate. This is one of the reasons why the two assessments complement each other well.

ELSA will reflect the comfort zone of the candidate to understand and express himself in English. Where schooling models were not at desired levels in preparing the learner to COPE (Cognition & Proficiency in English), the results will serve as a warning that a learner is set up for failure to perform at a level too far removed from the coping level.

The LPCAT uses nonverbal figural reasoning content in a test-train-retest format in an attempt to measure learning potential in the fluid reasoning ability domain so that language proficiency or formal academic qualifications should not impact significantly on performance. LPCAT indicates the potential of a candidate to learn or be trained, despite the shortfalls of educational preparation. It is a safe indicator that a learner can be trained to reach the level of potential indicated in the results.

In a development programme it is important to analyse the gaps in knowledge, skills and application for the level of potential to be accomplished. ELSA is a good indicator of the language and numerical proficiency. Other instruments will determine other aspects impacting on development such as aptitude, ability and interest. A development programme towards the level of potential determined by LPCAT can thus be planned.

Prof. Marié de Beer, developer of the LPCAT, has compared the predictive validity of ELSA and LPCAT using a sample of the SASOL bursary candidates and found it to be very similar. She recommends a combined use to provide a complete picture of the individual as the two instruments do not cover the same content areas.

A standardised mathematical assessment was also used with the same group and also provided the best predictive validity. It is however recognised that using only such an instrument in the light of the quality of our educational system would not be fair practise.

Prof. Pieter Schaap from the UP Human Resources Development department has recently compared correlation of ELSA with the typical values of the American SAT and ACT used on large scale for student selection and found it to compare very favourable.

- The LPCAT provides useful information in terms of indicating the level of general reasoning ability and learning potential shown by individuals. It can indicate at what academic level an individual is likely to be able to perform or the amount of effort required from an individual to achieve success at a certain level.
- ELSA provides information on the individual's ability to interact with information presented in a learning programme and serves to predict the trainability where English is the language of instruction.

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