



[Home](#) | [Tests](#) | [Products](#) | [Services](#) | [Research](#) | [Store](#) | [Contact Us](#)

[Tests Directory](#) > [ICT Literacy Assessment – Information and Communication Technology Literacy](#)

News

College Students Fall Short in Demonstrating the ICT Literacy Skills Necessary for Success in College and the Workplace

Contact: Karen Bogan
1-609-683-2902
kbogan@ets.org

In This Section

- [ICT Literacy Home](#)
- [ICT Literacy Details](#)
- [News](#)
- [Conferences and Events](#)

Related Links

- [Higher Education Home Solutions](#)
- [Criterion](#)
- [Major Field Tests](#)
- [MAPP](#)
- [SIR II](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Princeton, N.J. (November 14, 2006) — Despite the assumption that today's college students are tech savvy and ICT literate, preliminary research released by ETS today shows that many students lack the critical thinking skills to perform the kinds of information management and research tasks necessary for academic success.

ETS reached these conclusions after evaluating the responses of 6,300 students who took the company's ICT (information and communication technology) Literacy Assessment this year.

The ICT Literacy Assessment measures a student's ability to use critical thinking to define, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, create and communicate information in a technological environment. Test takers are asked to perform 15 information management tasks—such as extracting information from a database, developing a spreadsheet, or composing an e-mail summary of research findings—in a simulated online testing environment.

Some of the most surprising preliminary research findings are that only 52% of test takers could correctly judge the objectivity of a Web site, and only 65% could correctly judge the site's authoritativeness. In a Web search task, only 40% entered multiple search terms to narrow the results. And when selecting a research statement for a class assignment, only 44% identified a statement that captured the demands of the assignment. More results are available at ets.org/ictliteracy/prelimfindings.html (PDF).

The results may be surprising to the general public because there is an assumption that because students have grown up with computers, they are ICT literate," says Irvin R. Katz, Senior Research Scientist at ETS. "Those in academia have long suspected that while college-age students can use technology, they don't necessarily know what to do with the content the technology provides. Our preliminary findings



show that, in large part, those suspicions are well founded."

Alexius Macklin, Associate Professor of Library Science at Purdue University, said that the preliminary research findings illustrate that most students do not have the ICT literacy skills needed to complete college-level assignments efficiently.

"The reality is that when you give students a research assignment, they go straight to Google™ without any thought to their actual research question or the information need," Macklin says. "They draw information from questionable resources because they don't know the difference between information they find from an ad or a biased source, and that which they find on an authoritative, timely, objective site. The preliminary research from ETS shows us that a majority of our students are not ICT literate enough to succeed academically . . . they do not currently have the skills to analyze and synthesize information into something manageable and useful for their needs."

The findings were compiled from students who took two versions of the company's ICT Literacy Assessment, which is used voluntarily by higher education institutions and high schools that want to assess their students' ICT literacy skills. The Core level of the assessment is designed for high school seniors and first-year students at community colleges and four-year institutions. The Advanced level is designed for rising juniors at four-year institutions and students transitioning from community colleges to four-year institutions.

"The ICT Literacy Assessment really grew out of a concern expressed by colleges and universities that while they understood the importance of ICT literacy skills, they had no standard way to measure them," says Mary Ann Zaborowski, ETS's Executive Director of Product Management. "ETS worked with educators to develop a tool that would be useful to them."

In 2001, ETS formed an international panel of education, business and government leaders to help define ICT literacy, and then pulled together a consortium of librarians, professors and administrators from college and university systems, representing about 25 percent of U.S. college students. This consortium of educators and ICT literacy experts advised ETS in the development of the test, participating in field trials and pilot tests, and providing feedback about how the test could be improved.

While the initial snapshot of students' ICT literacy skills is bleak, Macklin says, the good news is that it is possible to teach these skills. "The preliminary findings from ETS show us that institutions need to consider how to better integrate ICT literacy skills into and across the curricula. It may require initiating an ICT literacy initiative or allocating resources differently. It's important to help our students better evaluate, manage and communicate information so that they can succeed in school, at work and in life. And now we know that the results are measurable."

Additional findings are available at www.ets.org/ictliteracy/prelimfindings.html (PDF). For more information about the ICT Literacy Assessment, visit www.ets.org/ictliteracy. To view an online demo, visit www.ets.org/ictliteracy/demo.html.

About ETS

ETS is a nonprofit institution with a long-held commitment to advance learning. The mission of ETS is to advance quality and equity in education by providing fair and valid assessments, research and related services for all people worldwide. In serving individuals, educational institutions and government agencies around the world, ETS customizes solutions to meet the need for teacher professional development products and services, classroom and end-of-course assessments, and research-based teaching and learning tools. Founded in 1947 and based in Princeton, New Jersey, ETS develops, administers and scores more than 24 million tests annually in more than 180 countries, at over 9,000 locations worldwide.

[About ETS](#) [Careers](#) [Privacy and Security](#) [Legal](#) [Site Map](#)

Copyright © 2006 by Educational Testing Service. All rights reserved.
The ETS logo is a registered trademark of Educational Testing Service.