

**Students' Perception of Own Preparedness for Higher Education:
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Bloemfontein, South Africa 9300***KEYWORDS** Student Success. Widening Access. Student Experience. South African Universities

ABSTRACT South African universities have been grappling with access issues and low preparedness of first-time entering students with the post-1994 widening of access to students with a non-English speaking background. The purpose of this paper is to discuss student preparedness at a University of Technology in South Africa and to analyse how first year students perceive their readiness for tertiary studies. Qualitative and quantitative designs were used in this study. A survey questionnaire was designed and distributed amongst 1500 first-year students to collect data on the following: whether these students were enrolled in programmes of their choice; attendance of orientation; ability to communicate in English; and their possession of basic computer and numeracy skills. Descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the results. Generically speaking, the students' perceptions are contrary to the literature evidence and statistics at the institution, with the students perceiving themselves as possessing the requisite critical skills for success in higher education. However, the performance in assessment outcomes at the case university does not necessarily confirm this. Regardless of how students perceive their preparedness, this study will hopefully contribute to the institution improving the quality of support programmes and ensuring students' full participation in academic support programmes.