

**iSkills Assessment**  
Emily Shindledecker  
California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB)  
Office of Institutional Research  
September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**iSkills Content**

“The iSkills assessment measures information literacy through seven task types — Define, Access, Evaluate, Manage, Integrate, Create and Communicate — representing a range of ways that students handle information through digital technology” (ETS, 2013).

**iSkills Task Types**

Definitions of the seven iSkills task types follow along with some example questions (ETS, 2013):

- **Define** — Understand and articulate the scope of an information problem in order to facilitate the electronic search for information by:
  - Distinguishing a clear, concise and topical research question from poorly framed questions, such as ones that are overly broad or do not otherwise fulfill the information need
  - Asking questions of a "professor" that help disambiguate a vague research assignment
  - Conducting effective preliminary information searches to help frame a research statement
- **Access** — Collect and/or retrieve information in digital environments. Information sources might be web pages, databases, discussion groups, emails or online descriptions of print media. Tasks include:
  - Generating and combining search terms (keywords) to satisfy the requirements of a particular research task
  - Efficiently browsing one or more resources to locate pertinent information
  - Deciding what types of resources might yield the most useful information for a particular need
- **Evaluate** — Judge whether information satisfies an information problem by determining authority, bias, timeliness, relevance and other aspects of materials. Tasks include:
  - Judging the relative usefulness of provided web pages and online journal articles
  - Evaluating whether a database contains appropriately current and pertinent information
  - Deciding the extent to which a collection of resources sufficiently covers a research area
- **Manage** — Organize information to help you or others find it later by:
  - Categorizing emails into appropriate folders based on a critical view of the emails' contents
  - Arranging personnel information into an organizational chart
  - Sorting files, emails or database returns to clarify clusters of related information
- **Integrate** — Interpret and represent information using digital tools to synthesize, summarize, compare and contrast information from multiple sources. Tasks include:

- Comparing advertisements, emails or websites from competing vendors by summarizing information into a table
- Incorporating information from different sources to conduct a scientific experiment and report the results
- Placing results from an academic or sports tournament into a spreadsheet to clarify standings and decide the need for playoffs
- **Create** — Adapt, apply, design or construct information in digital environments by:
  - Editing and formatting a document according to a set of editorial specifications
  - Creating a presentation slide to support a position on a controversial topic
  - Creating a data display to clarify the relationship between academic and economic variables
- **Communicate** — Disseminate information tailored to a particular audience in an effective digital format by:
  - Formatting a document to make it more useful to a particular group
  - Transforming an email into a succinct presentation to meet an audience's needs
  - Selecting and organizing slides for distinct presentations to different audiences
  - Designing a flyer to advertise to a distinct group of users

## The Study

A total of 190 CSUSB students participated in the iSkills Assessment between January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013 and April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013. Of those 190 students, 6% (n=11) performed below the minimum proficiency level, 65% (n=124) performed at the developing level, 26% (n=50) performed at the foundational level, and 3% (n=5) performed at the advanced level. Forty-eight percent (n=91) of students were classified as freshman and 52% (n=99) of students were classified as seniors. There were a greater percentage of seniors in the developing (69% vs. 62%), foundational (27% vs. 25%), and advanced (3% vs. 2%) proficiency levels than freshman (Table 1). Conversely, there were a greater percentage of freshmen scoring below minimum proficiency (11% vs. 1%) than seniors (Table 1). Caution is suggested when comparing percentages due to a low sample size. **It is our conclusion that although these percentages appear in the appropriate direction, we would expect a greater discrepancy between freshman and seniors in the developing, foundational, and advanced proficiency levels.**

Table 1. iSkills Proficiency by Level

Level	Below Min. Proficiency		Developing		Foundational		Advanced		Total	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Freshman	10	11%	56	62%	23	25%	2	2%	91	100%
Senior	1	1%	68	69%	27	27%	3	3%	99	100%
Total	11	6%	124	65%	50	26%	5	3%	190	100%

Each level is described in detail below (ETS, 2013):

**Below Minimum Proficiency (Score < 130)**

- Students scoring below the minimum proficiency level did not receive a certificate of achievement.

**Developing (Score 130 – 250)**

- Moderate ability to articulate and clarify the demands of a research task
- Consistent success in searching a well-defined database to locate and retrieve information
- Moderate ability to judge the adequacy of information for a specific purpose
- Basic ability to use a simple organizational scheme to categorize information
- Some success in combining relevant information to draw fundamental conclusions
- Basic understanding of creating focused presentations that meet the needs of an identified audience

**Foundational (Score 260 -340)**

- Clear ability to articulate and clarify the demands of a research task
- Consistent success in searching and navigating sources to locate and retrieve information
- Moderate ability to judge the currency, appropriateness, and adequacy of information and information sources for a specific purpose
- Moderate ability to use an organizational scheme to categorize information
- Success in combining relevant information to draw fundamental conclusions
- Clear ability to design and produce documents (e.g., text, presentations) that fulfill most requirements of a task and of an identified audience

**Advanced (Score 350 – 500)**

- Articulate and clarify the demands of a research task
- Search and navigate sources to locate and retrieve information
- Judge the currency, appropriateness, and adequacy of information and information sources for a specific purpose
- Use an organizational scheme to categorize information
- Synthesize information, making broad and deep connections, to reach conclusions
- Design and produce a wide variety of documents (e.g., text, graphics, presentations) that fulfill all requirements of a task and of an identified audience

## Reference

Educational Testing Service (ETS) (2013). ETS iSkills. *iSkills Assessment Content*. Retrieved September 9, 2013, from <https://www.ets.org/iskills/about/content/>