

Research Matters : 2

A CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT PUBLICATION



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If you would like to comment on any of the articles in this issue, please contact Sylvia Green.

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The full issue and copies of articles are available on our website

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Foreword

Welcome to the second issue of *Research Matters*, a biannual publication from Cambridge Assessment. The aim of this publication is to share assessment research in a range of fields with colleagues within Cambridge Assessment and in the wider assessment community and to comment on prominent research issues. Contributions are mostly from Assessment Research and Development staff working across many areas of assessment and examinations. However, in this issue we also include two articles from the *Financial Times* which take an interesting view of A-level examinations. Since the publication of Issue 1 we have published a special issue which reported on *Variations in aspects of writing in 16+ English examinations between 1980 and 2004*. I hope that you will find *Research Matters* interesting and informative.

I am pleased to announce that Tim Oates has joined us as Group Director of the growing Assessment Research and Development Division. Tim joined us from the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency, where he was Head of Research and Statistics for most of the last decade. Tim is ideally qualified to make sure that research is at the heart of Cambridge Assessment and I am delighted to welcome him on board.

Simon Lebus *Group Chief Executive*

Editorial

In this issue we report on a wide range of research topics from vocational assessment to new technologies. The first four articles describe research presented at conferences. In the opening article Irenka Suto and Sylvia Green discuss international perspectives on vocational education. Much of this project was presented in a discussion group at the annual conference of The Association for Educational Assessment in Europe (AEA-Europe) in November 2005. This is followed by an article by Irenka Suto and Jackie Greatorex on 'A cognitive psychological exploration of the GCSE marking process'. Aspects of this research were presented at two conferences in 2005: those of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and AEA-Europe. 'Examiners' annotations: Practice and purpose' by Victoria Crisp and Martin Johnson looks at current annotation practices in examination marking and was presented at the BERA conference in September 2005. Martin Johnson and Jackie Greatorex then discuss issues of validity in judging learners' work on screen, which was also presented at the BERA conference.

These articles are followed by an evaluation of the Cambridge Assessment/Oxford University automatic marking system by Nicholas Raikes which follows from his article in the first issue of *Research Matters*. John Bell and Joanne Emery then take a new look at the debate surrounding the decline in the number of students taking A-level mathematics and discover that the situation is more optimistic than has been reported.

The two articles from *The Financial Times*, reprinted with their permission, describe what happened when four *Financial Times*' columnists agreed to sit some of the 2005 papers.

In his article, 'The Cambridge Assessment Network', Andrew Watts outlines the way in which the Research Division and Cambridge Assessment Network work together to enhance professional development in the assessment community.

And finally, 'Research News' includes conferencing information and details of recent publications.

Sylvia Green *Director of Research*