

Research News

Karen Barden Research Division

Conference presentations

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

In September 2018, the British Educational Research Association (BERA) went to Northumbria University in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, to host its 44th conference. Each year, the conference provides a valuable opportunity for researchers to share their work and to discuss and debate across many educational themes. Several researchers from Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Filio Constantinou and Lucy Chambers, Research Division: *'That path won't lead nowhere': non-standard English in UK students' writing over time.*

Simon Child, Cambridge Assessment Network, and Sylvia Vitello, Research Division: *Faster, higher, stronger? A comparison of content coverage and teacher pedagogy in Technical Awards and GCSEs in sport-related subjects.*

Tim Gill, Research Division: *How have students and schools performed on the Progress 8 performance measure?* The presentation and commentary can be viewed as a *Research Byte* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qEtOfJAiMs

International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA)

The 44th Annual Conference of the IAEA took place in Oxford, UK, in September 2018 with the theme of *Assessment and Big Data*. The conference focused on new ways of discovering and quantifying important Big Data measures with sufficient reliability and validity, and new quantitative techniques that will emerge from the world of Big Data. Several researchers from Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Matthew Carroll, Research Division: *News articles as data: analysing the portrayal of exams in the UK print media.* The presentation and commentary can be viewed as a *Research Byte* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZCjWVso9Kw

Tom Sutch, Nicole Klir, and Anne-Claire Gueranger, Research Division: *Gaining insight from social media data in educational assessment.* The presentation and commentary can be viewed as a *Research Byte* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOOKPSvLf0M

Martin Johnson, Research Division, and Stuart Shaw, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Developing a framework for assessing computer-based test washback.*

Edmund Jones and Rick Chalton: Cambridge Assessment English: *Using Big Data to counteract cheating on tests.*

Sarah Matthey and Stuart Shaw, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Predictive validity: Using success on acceleration programmes for postsecondary admissions and predicting university success.*

Nick Raikes, Research Division: *Data, data everywhere? Opportunities and challenges in a data-rich world.* A transcript of the presentation features as the third article in this issue on pp.16–19. The presentation and commentary can be viewed as a *Research Byte* at www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_FP6YDDJ1I&t=2s

Nicky Rushton, Research Division: *What lessons from current working practice can be applied to big data? Identifying GCSE equivalents across many jurisdictions.*

Carmen Vidal Rodeiro, Research Division, and Stuart Shaw: *The value of predictive validity studies and the need for 'fit-for-purpose' data to inform postsecondary admissions policies and decision-making in the United States.*

Stuart Shaw: *The construction of a validity portfolio for general educational qualifications: A suggested approach to large-scale validation.*

Stuart Shaw and Marta Czajkowska, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Research issues and challenges in the design, construction and implementation of an L2 school student survey.*

Sylvia Vitello and Joanna Williamson, Research Division: *Effects of AS/A level reforms in England: Extra insights from the National Pupil Database.*

Wafa Al-Yaqoobi, Basma Al-Sedeq, Directorate of National Examinations, National Authority for Qualifications and Quality Assurance of Education and Training, Bahrain, and Stuart Shaw: *Evaluating the impact of the Bahrain National Examinations*

Stuart Shaw also led a pre-conference workshop on *Achieving in Content Through Language: Assessing Bilingual and Multilingual Learners.*

EARLI SIG 14 - Learning and Professional Development

The EARLI Special Interest Group (SIG) 14 - Learning and Professional Development focuses on professional and vocational education and training and has a particular set of interests associated with learning at, and for, work. The 9th edition of the conference took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in September 2018 and was dedicated to the topic of *Interaction, learning and professional development*. Martin Johnson, Research Division, presented a paper on *Learning to think alike: A study of professional examiners' feedback interactions in a UK Qualification Awarding Organisation.*

Association for Educational Assessment-Europe (AEA-Europe)

Held in November 2018, the 19th AEA-Europe Annual Conference took place in Arnhem-Nijmegen, the Netherlands, with the theme of *Building bridges to future educational assessment*. Several researchers from Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Tom Benton, Research Division: *Exploring the relationship between optimal methods of item scoring and selection and predictive validity*.

Tom Bramley, Research Division: *Evaluating the 'similar items method' for standard maintaining*.

Filio Constantinou, Research Division: *Constructs over time: the construct of language competence as captured in tests in England over the last 150 years*.

Victoria Crisp, Tom Bramley, Research Division, and Stuart Shaw, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Should we be banking on it? Exploring potential issues in the use of 'item' banking with structured examination questions*.

Martin Johnson, Research Division, and Stuart Shaw: *A Study in Computer-Based Testing Washback: A Framework for Supporting Practitioner Research*.

Isabel Nisbet, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, and Stuart Shaw: *"It all depends on how we look at things" – Bringing a lens to fairness in assessment*.

Tim Oates, Assessment Research and Development: *Individualised learning, personalised learning – implications for assessment*.

Sarah Matthey and Stuart Shaw, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Predictive validity: Using success on acceleration programmes for postsecondary admissions and predicting university success*.

Joanna Williamson and Matthew Carroll, Research Division: *Vocational, technical and applied qualifications within upper secondary education in England: Who takes them, how do they fit within students' programmes of study, and where do students progress to next?* The presentation and commentary can be viewed as a Research Byte at www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJgWpNjORnk

Stuart Shaw also led a pre-conference workshop on *Achieving in Content Through Language: Assessing Bilingual and Multilingual Learners*.

MAXQDA User Conference

The MAXQDA User Conference took place in February 2019 in Berlin, Germany with the theme *Learn. Discover. Connect*. The event centred on questions on how to optimize the use of MAXQDA in the various methodological and thematical settings of qualitative and mixed-methods research. This year is the 30th anniversary of MAXQDA and the welcoming address covered the history, present, and future of MAXQDA. There were a number of spotlight sessions and 'round tables' giving a chance to explore features of the software, and discuss questions and techniques with other delegates.

Lucy Chambers, Research Division, gave a poster presentation on *Moderating artwork: Investigating judgements and cognitive processes*. This was based on her research with colleagues, Joanna Williamson

and Simon Child, and features as the fourth article in this issue on pp.19–25.

Further information on all conference papers can be found on our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/conference-papers/

The Cambridge Approach to Curriculum

This event was held in Cambridge, UK, in March 2019. It included presentations from Tim Oates, CBE, Assessment Research and Development, Martin Johnson and Tori Coleman, Research Division, and Abigail Barnett, Cambridge Assessment International Education. Delegates discussed key issues around how to develop a working model of a curriculum, as well as some of the core issues in curriculum development.

UK Rasch Users' Group

Cambridge Assessment hosted the 13th annual meeting of the UK Rasch Users' Group in March 2019 at The Triangle Building in Cambridge, UK. It was attended by over 70 Rasch users from universities and external organisations including Ofqual, AQA, and Pearson UK. The event provided delegates with an informal forum for sharing work and networking, as well as the opportunity to hear presentations including those from Joanna Williamson, Matthew Carroll, and Tom Benton, Research Division. Further insight from the event can be found on our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/rasch-researchers-collaborate-at-cambridge/

Publications

The following articles have been published since *Research Matters*, Issue 26:

Bramley, T., & Crisp, V. (2019). Spoilt for choice? Issues around the use and comparability of optional exam questions. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 26(1), 75–90. Available online at DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2017.1287662

Carroll, M., & Benton, T. (2018). *The link between subject choices and achievement at GCSE and performance in PISA 2015*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/517876-the-link-between-subject-choices-and-achievement-at-gcse-and-performance-in-pisa-2015.pdf The Executive summary of the report is available at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/517878-the-link-between-subject-choices-and-achievement-at-gcse-and-performance-in-pisa-2015-executive-summary.pdf

Constantinou, F., Chambers, L., Zanini, N., & Klir, N. (2019). A diachronic perspective on formality in students' writing: empirical findings from the UK. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*. Advance online publication available at DOI: 10.1080/07908318.2018.1563609

Gill, T. (2018). *The impact of the introduction of Progress 8 on the uptake of qualifications in English schools – an update for 2016/17*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/

519667-the-impact-of-the-introduction-of-progress-8-on-the-uptake-of-qualifications-in-english-schools-an-update-for-2016-17.pdf

Nisbet, I., & Shaw, S. (2019). Fair assessment viewed through the lenses of measurement theory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*. Advance online publication available at DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2019.1586643

Johnson, M., & Shaw, S. (2018). What is computer-based testing washback, how can it be evaluated, and how can this support practitioner research? *Journal of Further and Higher Education*. Advance online publication available at DOI: 10.1080/0309877X.2018.1471127

Shaw, S., & Vidal Rodeiro, C.L. (2019). The Value of Predictive Validity Studies and the Need for 'Fit-for-Purpose' Data to Inform Postsecondary Admissions Policies and Decision Making. *Strategic Enrollment Management Quarterly*, 6(4), 23–39. Available online at www.aacrao.org/research-publications/quarterly-journals/semi-quarterly/article/volume-6/issue-4/the-value-of-predictive-validity-studies-and-the-need-for-fit-for-purpose-data-to-inform-postsecondary-admissions-policies-and-decision-making-in-the-united-states

Vidal Rodeiro, C.L., & Williamson, J. (2018). Meaningful destinations: using national data to investigate how different education pathways support young people's progression in England. *Research Papers in Education*. Advance online publication available at DOI: 10.1080/02671522.2018.1536889

Walland, E., & Darlington, E. (2019). *Insights on trends in AS Levels, the EPQ and Core Maths: summary report*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/527125-insights-on-trends-in-as-levels-the-epq-and-core-maths-summary-report.pdf

Williamson, J., & Vitello, S. (2018). *Reformed A level results: Do candidates who take the AS level achieve better grades?* Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/513414-reformed-a-level-results-do-candidates-who-take-the-as-level-achieve-better-grades-.pdf

Williamson, J., & Vitello, S. (2018). *AS level trends 2018*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/519907-as-level-trends-2018.pdf

Further information on all journal papers and book chapters can be found on our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/journal-papers-and-book-chapters/

Reports of research carried out by the Research Division for Cambridge Assessment and our exam boards, or externally funded research carried out for third parties, including the regulators in the UK and many ministries overseas, are also available from our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/research-reports/

Statistics Reports and Data Bytes

The **Statistics Reports Series** provides statistical summaries of various aspects of the English examination system, such as trends in pupil uptake and attainment, qualifications choice, subject combinations and

subject provision at school. The reports, mainly produced using national-level examination data, are available in both PDF and Microsoft® Excel format on our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/statistical-reports/

The most recent additions to the series are:

- Carroll, M., & Gill, T. (2018). *Statistics Report Series No. 120: Provision of GCE A level subjects 2017*
- Gill, T. (2018). *Statistics Report Series No. 121: Uptake of GCSE subjects 2017*
- Gill, T. (2018). *Statistics Report Series No. 122: Uptake of GCE A level subjects 2017*
- Gill, T. (2018). *Statistics Report Series No. 123: Provision of GCSE subjects 2017*

Data Bytes is a series of data graphics from Cambridge Assessment's Research Division, designed to bring the latest trends and research in educational assessment to a wide audience. Topics are often chosen to coincide with contemporary news or recent Cambridge Assessment research outputs. All **Data Bytes** can be found on our website: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/data-bytes

The following **Data Bytes** have been published since *Research Matters*, Issue 26 – those with interactive graphics are indicated with (I):

- October 2018: *Tweets on A level results day*
- December 2018: *Parents' views on education around the world (I)*
- February 2019: *Geography assessment over time*
- March 2019: *Progression from GCSE (I)*

Sharing our research

Cambridge Assessment is home to the largest research capacity of its kind in Europe. In addition to our research publications, we provide a wealth of resources on our website including:

- **Insights** – a platform for sharing our views and research on the big education topics that impact assessment around the globe – at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/insights
- **Research Bytes** – short presentations and commentary based on recent conference presentations – at www.youtube.com/user/CambridgeAssessment1
- **#CamEdLive** – our online live debates – at www.youtube.com/user/CambridgeAssessment1
- Podcasts at www.youtube.com/user/CambridgeAssessment1
- Blogs at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs

You can also learn more about our recent activities from Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram.

Finally, a reminder that all previous issues of *Research Matters* are available to download, in full and as PDFs of individuals articles, from www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/research-matters