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Research News

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Research News

Anouk Peigne Research Division

Tim Oates talks in his Foreword to this edition of *Research Matters* about the impact of the pandemic on our work at Cambridge Assessment. Another very noticeable effect has been the sharp rise in the volume of discussion in the specialist and mainstream domestic media about aspects of the UK education system. Much commentary has, in the past, tended to focus on expunging GCSEs, with calls tending to come from the same few individuals, often motivated by limited self-interest. However, the events of the past 12 months have catalysed opinion on this matter and others. Often assertions have been made without supportive facts. It is right to debate such issues, but we believe in setting our views in the context of evidence.

Cambridge Assessment and Cambridge University Press have chosen to contribute to the debate initially through a series of blogs, research papers and events set around 12 outline principles for the future of education (see page 106). Over the course of this year, these will build into a rich compendium of thought, but also clear prescription for action. To date, we have written about how external assessment at the end of basic secondary education is more common around the world than is often suggested, how hurricanes and earthquakes can inform recovery learning in the wake of the current crisis, how education systems are adapting to the increased use of technology, and how assessment systems might be made more resilient. You can find these articles and more on [our website](#).

Chris Shadforth

Director of Communications

Blogs

The following blogs have been published since *Research Matters*, Issue 30:

Oates, T. (2021, March 4). *What hurricanes and earthquakes can tell us about Coronavirus 'recovery learning'*. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/coronavirus-recovery-learning/>

Oates, T. (2021, March 9). *Professor Jane Mellanby 1938-2021*. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/professor-jane-mellanby-obituary/>

Oates, T. (2021, March 18). *The importance of the individual – now, more than ever*. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/the-importance-of-the-individual/>

Suto, I. (2021, February 24). *Exams at 16? They're more common around the world than perhaps you thought...* <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/exams-at-16-more-common-around-the-world-than-you-thought/>

Conference Presentations

Education Assessment Research Seminar

In October 2020, Cambridge Assessment organised a series of virtual themed sessions, reflecting Ofqual's April 2020 seminar which had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. The themes were vocational qualifications, accessibility, marking and maintaining standards. Researchers of Cambridge Assessment presented various papers:

Tom Benton: *Introducing the simplified pairs method for standard maintaining.*

Vicki Crisp and Sylwia Macinska: *Creating better tests—students' views on the accessibility of different question design features.*

Sarah Hughes and Tony Leech: *OCR trials of comparative judgement for awarding: reliability, utility and validity considerations.*

Sylwia Macinska and Carla Pastorino: *Embedded tools for accessible on-screen assessment: a review of the evidence on effectiveness.*

Stuart Shaw and Isabel Nisbet: *What makes vocational assessments fair?*

Antonia Sudkaemper and Breanne Chryst: *Review of marking—comparing different types of feedback.*

Carmen Vidal Rodeiro and Sylwia Macinska: *Impact of access arrangements on performance.*

Sylvia Vitello and Carmen Vidal Rodeiro: *Vocational qualifications at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5: who takes them and how they fit into students' programmes of study.*

Emma Walland: *Leadership in the context of examining: perspectives of assessment specialists.*

The sessions are available to watch on the Cambridge Assessment website: <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/global-audience-for-assessment-research-seminar/>

AEA-Europe Online Conference

As Chair of the Scientific Programme Committee (SPC), Stuart Shaw from the Cambridge Assessment International Education organised the November 'Festival' which was a distilled version of the normal conference.

He also participated in various sessions: he acted as a panellist for *Assessment Cultures SIG. Focus: How did your education and assessment system react to the effects of Covid-19?* He co-presented *Life and Times of the Scientific Programme Committee: the work and remit of the SPC* with Elisa de Padua and Nico Dieteren. He co-chaired a PhD Session with Christina Wikström. Finally, he participated in the General Assembly *Presentation of the Annual Report on behalf of the Scientific Programme Committee.*

International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation

The annual ICERI conference took place online in November. In 2020, this conference covered various topics including Distance Learning in Times of Crisis, Pedagogical Methods and Innovations, Global Issues in Education and Research and brought together

participants from more than 70 countries.

Emma Walland and Stuart Shaw presented *Using e-portfolios to capture and assess transversal skills: tensions in theory and praxis*.

Publications

The following reports and articles have been published since *Research Matters*, Issue 30:

Benton, T., Cunningham, E., Hughes, S., & Leech, T. (2020). *Comparing the simplified pairs method of standard maintaining to statistical equating*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/599225-comparing-the-simplified-pairs-method-of-standard-maintaining-to-statistical-equating.pdf>

Benton, T., Leech, T., & Hughes, S. (2020). *Does comparative judgement of scripts provide an effective means of maintaining standards in mathematics?* Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/603922-does-comparative-judgement-of-scripts-provide-an-effective-means-of-maintaining-standards-in-mathematics-.pdf>

Cambridge Assessment. (2020). *Consultation regarding a potential GCSE in Natural History: Early findings*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. https://f.hubspotusercontent20.net/hubfs/4123326/Natural%20History%20Files/Natural%20History%20Consultation%20Report_110920.pdf?__hssc=251199705.71605626740691&__hstc=251199705.

Constantinou, F. (2020). What is synoptic assessment? Defining and operationalising an as yet non-mainstream assessment concept. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, 27(6), 670–686. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2020.1841734>

Crisp, V., Shaw, S. D., & Bramley, T. (2020). Should we be banking on it? Exploring potential issues in the use of 'item' banking with structured examination questions. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 27(6), 655–669. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2020.1827220>

Fitzsimons, S., & Johnson, M. (2020). How Collaborative Project Development Theory Can Be Used to Provide Guidance for International Curriculum Partnerships. *International Dialogues on Education: Past and Present*, 7(2), 24–39. <https://www.ide-journal.org/article/2020-volume-7-number-2-how-collaborative-project-development-theory-can-be-used-to-provide-guidance-for-international-curriculum-partnerships/>

Gill, T. (2020). *The relationship between taking a formal music qualification and overall attainment at Key Stage 4*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/603850-the-relationship-between-taking-a-formal-music-qualification-and-overall-attainment-at-key-stage-4.pdf>

Gill, T. (2020). *An analysis of grade boundary marks in A levels and GCSEs if the 2020 'standard' was applied to 2019 results*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/>

Images/604501-an-analysis-of-grade-boundary-marks-in-a-levels-and-gcses-if-the-2020-standard-was-applied-to-2019-results.pdf

Nisbet, I., & Shaw, S. D. (2020). *Is Assessment Fair?* Sage. <https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/is-assessment-fair/book266191>

Shaw, S. D. (2020). Achieving in Content Through Language: Towards a CEFR Descriptor Scale for Academic Language Proficiency. In M. deBoer, & D. Leontjev (Eds.), *Assessment and Learning in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) Classrooms: Approaches and Conceptualisations*. (pp.29–56). Springer Nature Switzerland AG. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-54128-6_2

Suto, I., & Oates, T. (2021). *High-stakes testing after basic secondary education: How and why is it done in high performing education systems?* Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/610965-high-stakes-testing-after-basic-secondary-education-how-and-why-is-it-done-in-high-performing-education-systems-.pdf>

Data Bytes

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. The following Data Byte has been published since Research Matters, Issue 30:

- December 2020: Does comparative judgement provide an effective means of maintaining standards in mathematics?

Sharing our research

We aim to make our research as widely available as possible. Listed below are links to the places where you can find our research online:

Journal papers and book chapters: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/journal-papers-and-book-chapters/

Research Matters (in full and as PDFs of individual articles): <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/research-matters/>

Conference papers: <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/conference-papers/>

Research reports: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/research-reports/

Data Bytes: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/data-bytes

Statistics reports: <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/statistical-reports/>

Blogs: www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/blogs/

Insights (a platform for sharing our views and research on the big education topics that impact assessment around the globe): <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/insights/>

Our YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/user/CambridgeAssessment1 contains Research Bytes (short presentations and commentary based on recent conference presentations), our online live debates #CamEdLive, and podcasts.

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