

Research News

Karen Barden Research Division

Conference presentations

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

The University of Sussex, Brighton, hosted the BERA Annual Conference in September 2017. This provided an opportunity to develop new ideas, and to build new relationships within the research education community. Several researchers from the Research Division of Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Ellie Darlington: *What is a non-specialist teacher?*

Gill Elliott: *Aspects of Writing: challenges and benefits of longitudinal research.*

Martin Johnson: *What is effective feedback in a professional learning context? A study of how examination markers feed back to each other on their marking performance.*

Carmen Vidal Rodeiro and Joanna Williamson: *Education and employment destinations of students in England: the value of 14-19 qualification.*

Nicky Rushton: *Spelling errors in 16-year-olds' writing.*

Sylvia Vitello and Cara Crawford: *Foundation or Higher tier? Effects of moving from a modular to linear system of GCSE assessment.*

International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA)

The 43rd Annual Conference of the IAEA took place in Batumi, Georgia, in October 2017 with the theme of *Assessment as a Social Lever*. Stuart Shaw, Cambridge Assessment International Education, presented a paper co-authored with Research Division colleagues Carmen Vidal Rodeiro and Cara Crawford on *Predicting the success of the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma in the United States*.

Stuart Shaw also presented papers on *The construction of a validity portfolio for general educational qualifications: a suggested approach to large-scale validation*; *An Exploration of the Nature and Assessment of Student Reflection*, co-authored with his Cambridge Assessment International Education colleague, Martina Kuvalja; and a post-conference workshop entitled *Issues around how best to provide evidence for assessment validity, reliability and fairness: the practice and challenge of validation*.

Association for Educational Assessment-Europe (AEA-Europe)

Held in November 2017, the 18th AEA-Europe Annual Conference took place in Prague, Czech Republic, under the theme of *Assessment Cultures in a Globalised World*. Several researchers from Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Tom Benton, Research Division: *Pooling the totality of our data resources to maintain standards in the face of changing cohorts.*

Tom Bramley and Tom Benton, Research Division: *Comparing small-sample equating with Angoff judgment for linking cut-scores on two tests.*

Lucy Chambers, Filio Constantinou, Nadir Zanini and Nicole Klir, Research Division: *Alternative uses of examination data: the case of English language writing.*

Gill Elliott and Nicky Rushton, Research Division: *Popular perceptions about the comparability of assessments in England. A tension between academia and the mainstream broadcast and print media?*

Sarah Hughes, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Developing a culture of research-informed practice by encouraging research uptake in an assessment organisation.*

Martin Johnson and Nicky Rushton, Research Division: *A culture of question writing: How do question writers compose examination questions in an examination paper?*

Martina Kuvalja, Stuart Shaw and Sarah Hughes, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Cambridge progression: Teachers' perspectives.*

Tim Oates, Assessment Research and Development: *Should there be a single assessment culture in a globalised world?*

Stuart Shaw and Martina Kuvalja, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *An exploration of the nature and assessment of student reflection.*

Sylvia Vitello and Tom Bramley, Research Division: *The effect of adaptivity on the reliability coefficient in Comparative Judgement.*

Frances Wilson, Neil Wade, OCR, Stuart Shaw, Sarah Hughes and Sarah Matthey, Cambridge Assessment International Education: *Evaluating written assessments of practical work – a taxonomy.*

The following poster was also presented:

Gill Elliott, Nicky Rushton and Jo Ireland: *Is the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in England incongruous in the light of other jurisdictions' approaches to assessment?*

MAXQDA International Conference

The MAXQDA International Conference took place in March 2018 in Berlin, Germany, bringing together international researchers who work and teach with MAXQDA. The event centred on questions on how to optimize the use of MAXQDA in the various methodological and thematic settings of qualitative and mixed methods research. Irenka Suto, Research Division, gave a poster presentation on *How do you solve a problem like the transition to university? The use of MAXQDA in a qualitative evaluation of additional support classes for undergraduate biologists.*

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

The Cambridge Approach to Improving Education

Tim Oates, CBE, Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, led the research into and wrote *A Cambridge Approach to Improving Education. Using international insights to manage complexity*¹ in which he sets out his findings and guiding principles for policymakers. It is part of a wide-ranging study of educational improvement across a range of jurisdictions and follows on from *The Cambridge Approach to Textbooks published in 2016*².

The launch in September 2017 was hosted by the UK think tank Policy Exchange. It included presentations by experts in the field including Dr John Jerrim, Reader in Educational and Social Statistics at the UCL Institute of Education, and John Blake, Head of Education and Social Reform, Policy Exchange.

The presentations were accompanied by discussion and debate with the attending education experts. This covered areas including whether smaller jurisdictions do better in international comparisons, how to explain the recent success of London, and how governments should respond to the challenges created by the digital revolution.

Further details and related materials, including a free download of the document, can be found on our website: <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/news/cambridge-approach-to-improving-education-launched/> A recording of the event is also available on the Policy Exchange website at <https://policyexchange.org.uk/pxevents/a-cambridge-approach-to-improving-education/10.1080/0305764X.2017.1337723>

Questioning Questions

In November 2017, more than 100 people attended Cambridge Assessment's flagship autumn event, *Questioning Questions*. The audience heard from education experts including Daisy Christodoulou, No More Marking's Director of Education, and Professor Bill Lucas, Director of the Centre for Real-World Learning and Professor of Learning at the University of Winchester, in the debate on how assessment can be used to drive effective learning.

Further details and related materials, including videos of all of the conference presentations, can be found on our website: <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/questioning-questions/>

Publications

The following articles have been published since *Research Matters Issue 24*:

- Benton, T. and Bramley, T. (2017). *Some thoughts on the 'Comparative Progression Analysis' method for investigating inter-subject comparability*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/416591-some-thoughts-on-the-comparative-progression-analysis-method-for-investigating-inter-subject-comparability.pdf>
- Bramley, T. and Vitello, S. (2018). The effect of adaptivity on the reliability coefficient in comparative judgement. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. Advance online publication available at <http://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2017.1418734>
- Child, S. F. J. and Shaw, S. D. (2018). Towards an operational framework for establishing and assessing collaborative interactions. *Research Papers in Education*. Advance online publication available at <http://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2018.1424928>
- Crawford, C. and Benton, T. (2017). *Volatility happens: Understanding variation in schools' GCSE results*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/372751-volatility-happens-understanding-variation-in-schools-gcseresults.pdf>
- Crisp, V. (2017). Exploring the relationship between validity and comparability in assessment. *London Review of Education*, 15(3), 523–535. Available online at <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.15.3.13>
- Crisp, V., Johnson, M., and Constantinou, F. (2018). A question of quality: Conceptualisations of quality in the context of educational test questions. *Research in Education*. Advance online publication available at <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523717752203>
- Darlington, E. (2017). *Other jurisdictions' use of technology in Mathematics curricula*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/426821-other-jurisdictions-use-of-technology-in-mathematics-curricula.pdf>
- Gill, T. (2017). *The impact of the introduction of Progress 8 on the uptake and provision of qualifications in English schools*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/421442-the-impact-of-the-introduction-of-progress-8-on-the-uptake-and-provision-of-qualifications-in-english-schools.pdf>
- Johnson, S. (2017). *Design challenges for national assessment in this accountability era: A background paper commissioned by Cambridge Assessment*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/428588-design-challenges-for-national-assessment-in-this-accountability-era.pdf>
- Shaw, S. D. and Imam, H. C. (2017). Towards a Scale of Academic Language Proficiency. Learning and Assessment: Making the Connections. *Proceedings of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) 6th International Conference*. Cambridge English Language Assessment/ALTE/cliQ, 224–235. Available online at <https://alte.wildapricot.org/resources/Documents/ALTE%202017%20Proceedings%20FINAL.pdf>
- Vidal Rodeiro, C.L., Crawford, C., and Shaw, S. (2017). From "AICE"-ing the Test to Earning the Degree: Enrollment and Graduation Patterns among Students with the Cambridge Advanced International

1. Oates, T. (2017). *A Cambridge Approach to Improving Education. Using international insights to manage complexity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at: <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/cambridge-approach-to-improving-education.pdf>

2. Oates, T. (2016). *The Cambridge Approach to Textbooks. Principles for designing high-quality textbooks and resource materials*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at: <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/299335-the-cambridge-approach-to-textbooks.pdf>

Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma. *College and University: Educating the Modern Higher Education Administration Professional*, 92(4), 12–23. Available online at <http://www4.aacrao.org/C&U/9204/12/>

Vitello, S. and Crawford, C. (2018). Which tier? Effects of linear assessment and student characteristics on GCSE entry decisions. *British Educational Research Journal*, 44(1), 94–118. Available online at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/berj.3320>

Zanini, N. and Williamson, J. (2017). *Learning aims: A preliminary exploration to monitor A/AS level reform*. Cambridge Assessment Research Report. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Assessment. Available online at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/360511-learning-aims-a-preliminary-exploration-to-monitor-a-level-reform.pdf>

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

Our Research Team

Cambridge Assessment is home to the largest research capability of its kind in Europe. You can now meet the people behind our leading-edge work, including some of the contributing authors to *Research Matters*, at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/our-research-team/>

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

The most recent additions to the series are:

- *Statistics Report Series No.114: Uptake of GCSE subjects 2016*
- *Statistics Report Series No.115: Provision of GCSE subjects 2016*
- *Statistics Report Series No.116: Uptake of GSE A level subjects 2016*
- *Statistics Report Series No.117: Provision of GSE A level subjects 2016*
- *Statistics Report Series No.118: Geographical variations in A level uptake in 2016*
- *Statistics Report Series No.119: Candidates awarded the A* grade at A level in 2016.*

Data Bytes is a series of data graphics from our 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.

Since *Research Matters* Issue 24, we have published the following *Data Bytes*, all of which can be found on our website at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/data-bytes/>:

- December 2017:
Geographical variations in A level subject uptake in 2016
(Interactive and linked to *Statistics Report Series No.118*)
- January 2018:
How much do I need to write to get top marks at GCSE?
How much do I need to write to get top marks at A level?
- February 2018:
Provision of reformed AS levels
- March 2018:
Influence of KS2 National Curriculum levels on GCSE tier entry.