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A framework for describing comparability between alternative assessments

Conference Paper Abstract

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A framework for describing comparability between alternative assessments

This presentation describes a study which sought to design a structure that can be used to evaluate comparability between alternative assessments. The credibility of an Awarding Organisation's products (and processes) is reliant, to a large degree, upon the claims it makes about its assessments (including comparability claims) and on the evidence it can provide in order to support such claims. For example, for syllabuses with options, such as the choice to conduct coursework or take an alternative to coursework exam, there is a qualification claim that overall candidates' results are comparable regardless of the choice made.

The study was undertaken in two phases. The first phase of the research focused on the development of a framework for evaluating comparability against a set of four standards as well as a separate recording form for capturing declared comparability intentions and how well these have been achieved (Baird, Cresswell & Newton, 2000; Pinot de Moira, Massey, Baird & Morrissy, 2002; Newton, 2005; Newton, 2007; Coe, 2010). The comparability process outlined here amasses a considerable body of information in relation to categories of evidence presented against the four standards of comparability and also provides a reasoned argument in order to structure and judge that information. The framework and recording form together:

- provide a structure for classifying dimensions of comparability in terms of established assessment standards
- afford an opportunity for test developers to consider their intentions with respect to the comparability claims they wish to make
- prompt an evaluation (on the part of the test developer) of how effectively the claims have been met
- provide evidence that could be used to reassure customers and other stakeholders in relation to the comparability of on-screen tests
- could, in addition, offer test design and development practitioners a means for evaluating assessments from competitor examination boards

The intended users of the framework and form are assessment developers and managers.

In the second phase of the study, the framework was piloted using two assessment contexts: on-screen and paper-based tests; and an Alternative to Practical and a Practical test.

Outcomes from the pilot, using two experts engaged with the framework and form, are summarised in terms of the comprehensibility, usefulness and frequency of application of the comparability framework and recording form.

In particular, this phase sought:

- to pilot the comparability framework and revise it if needed
- to identify the most suitable personnel to use the framework and recording form
- to provide guidance on the use of the framework and completion of the recording form

A number of recommendations are also suggested for who should engage with the comparability instruments and how they should use them.

References

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Full paper

An article about this work is likely to be published in the Spring 2020 issue of Research Matters: <https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/our-research/all-published-resources/research-matters/>