

Research News

Conferences and seminars

International Conference on Thinking (ICOT)

Beth Black presented two papers at the ICOT conference in Belfast in June: i) *Critical Thinking and its impact upon wider academic performance in school*; ii) *An overview of a programme of research to support the assessment of critical thinking*.

Values and Purpose in Citizenship, Social and Economics Education

In June Sanjana Mehta presented a paper entitled: *Why study Economics? Perspectives from 16 to 19 year old students*.

Journal of Vocational Education and Training (JVET)

Martin Johnson and Jackie Greatorex attended the JVET conference in Oxford in July. Martin gave a paper entitled: *Can you dig it? Developing an approach to validly assessing diverse skills in an archaeological context*. Jackie presented a paper on: *Comparing specifications in a diverse qualifications system: instrument development*.

International Computer Assisted Assessment (CAA)

Matt Haigh presented a paper at the CAA conference in Southampton in July entitled: *An investigation into the impact of item format on computer-based assessments*.

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

The BERA Annual Conference was held from 6-8 September 2011 at the Institute of Education, University of London. Colleagues from the Research Division and CIE presented the following papers:

Carmen Vidal Rodeiro: *Do special consideration enhancements skew examination grades?*

Sanjana Mehta, Irenka Suto, Gill Elliott and Nicky Rushton: *Independent research at A level: students' and teachers' experiences*.

Tom Bramley and Vikas Dhawan: *Estimates of reliability at qualification level for GCSE and A level examination*.

Matt Haigh: *An investigation into the impact of screen design on computer-based assessments*.

Martin Johnson, Rebecca Hopkin, Hannah Shiell and John Bell: *Extended essay marking on screen: does marking mode influence marking outcomes and processes?*

Nicky Rushton, Irenka Suto, Gill Elliott and Sanjana Mehta: *Small is beautiful? An exploration of class size at A level*.

Irenka Suto, Gill Elliott, Nicky Rushton and Sanjana Mehta: *Going beyond the syllabus: views from teachers and students of A level Mathematics*.

Victoria Crisp and Rebecca Hopkin: *Modelling question difficulty in an A level Physics examination*.

Victoria Crisp and Stuart Shaw: *How valid is A level Physics? A wide-ranging evaluation of the validity of Physics A level assessments*.

Jackie Greatorex, Nicky Rushton, Sanjana Mehta and Rebecca Hopkin: *Comparing specifications in a diverse qualifications system: instrument development*.

Gill Elliott: *100 years of controversy over standards: making sense of the issues*.

Jackie Greatorex: *Comparing different types of qualifications (e.g. vocational versus academic)*.

Stuart Shaw and Victoria Crisp also presented a poster entitled: *Identifying a set of methods for validating traditional examinations: a difficult task requiring multiple methods*.

European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

In September Tom Bramley attended the ECER annual conference in Berlin and presented a paper entitled: *Investigating and reporting information about marker reliability in high stakes external school examinations*.

International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA)

The 37th annual IAEA conference took place in October in Manila, Philippines. The conference theme was 'The assessment and challenge of globalisation'. Nick Raikes presented a paper on *Making the most of our assessment data: Cambridge Assessment's Information Services Platform*.

Association for Educational Assessment – Europe (AEA-Europe)

The AEA-Europe annual conference took place in Queen's University, Belfast in November with the theme of 'Managing Assessment Processes: Policies and Research'.

The following papers were presented:

Carmen Vidal and Sylvia Green: *Linear or modular – does one size fit all? An investigation into the effects of modularisation at GCSE*.

Rebecca Hopkin and Victoria Crisp: *Item difficulty modelling: exploring the usefulness of this technique in a European context*.

Victoria Crisp: *The judgement processes involved in the assessment of project work by teachers*.

Stuart Shaw and Victoria Crisp: *Translating validation research into everyday practice: issues facing an international awarding body*.

Nicky Rushton: *What form of interim feedback most motivates students? A study of teachers' perceptions of the impact of assessment*.

Stuart Shaw and Victoria Crisp also presented a poster entitled: *An argument-based approach to validation: building, evaluating, and presenting the arguments*.

For copies of conference papers please visit our website: http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Our_Services/Research/Conference_Papers

Publications

In October a Special Issue of *Research Matters* on Comparability was published. This explores some of Cambridge Assessment's recent thinking on Comparability and includes a range of articles on terminology, method, subject difficulty and comparing different types of qualifications.

For a copy of the Special Issue please email:

researchprogrammes@cambridgeassessment.org.uk

or visit the Cambridge Assessment website:

http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Our_Services/Research/Research_Matters

The following articles have been published since Issue 12 of *Research Matters*:

Bell, J.F. (2011). The small-study effect in educational trials. *Effective Education*, **3**, 1, 35-48.

Black, B., Suto, I. and Bramley, T. (2011). The interrelations of features of questions, mark schemes and examinee responses and their impact upon marker agreement. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policies and Practice*, **18**, 3, 295-318.

Crisp, V., Johnson, M. and Novaković, N. (2011). The effects of features of examination questions on the performance of students with dyslexia. *British Educational Research Journal*. Available online at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01411926.2011.584964>

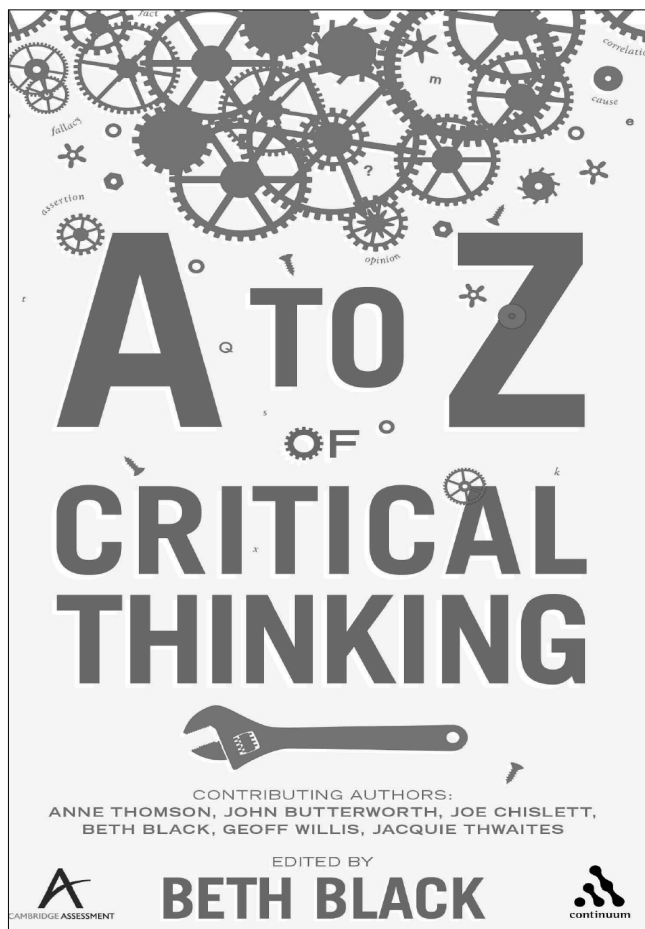
Crisp, V. (2011). Identifying features that affect the difficulty and functioning of science exam questions for all candidates and specifically for those with reading difficulties. *Irish Educational Studies*, **30**, 3, 323-343.

Gill, T. and Bell, J.F. (2011). What factors determine the uptake of A level Physics? *International Journal of Science Education*. Available online at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09500693.2011.577843>

Nádas, R. (2011). Tudod-é? – iskolai e-értékelés (E-assessment in schools). *Mindennapi Pszichológia* (Everyday Psychology)

CRITICAL THINKING

A to Z of Critical Thinking



A to Z of Critical Thinking, just published in the UK, is a definitive reference tool on Critical Thinking, offering clear explanations and enlightening examples of all the key terms and concepts. This book is the product of a collaboration between the Research Division at Cambridge Assessment and leading experts in this discipline. The book is published by Continuum Publishing, a leading independent academic publisher based in London and New York.

Critical Thinking has become increasingly prominent as an academic discipline taught and examined in schools and universities around the world, as well as a crucial skill for everyday life. A successful critical thinker needs to understand how the different concepts and terms are defined and used. However, Critical Thinking – perhaps more than many disciplines – suffers from problems of definition since much of its terminology is used imprecisely (or just differently) in everyday language.

This definitive A to Z guide provides precise definitions for over 130 terms and concepts used in Critical Thinking. Each entry presents a short definition followed by a more detailed explanation. The aim of this glossary is to provide authoritative clarification and disambiguation of the terms and concepts that are the tools of good thinking.

Cambridge Assessment has been assessing Critical Thinking in a variety of tests and qualifications for over two decades (longer than any other UK awarding body) and, as such, has a special interest in the discipline. This 'A to Z' is the culmination of a longer programme of research, which has included deriving a definition and taxonomy of Critical Thinking (Black *et al.*, 2008), exploring how the discipline is taught in schools (Black, 2010), and its impact on other academic disciplines (Black and Gill, 2011).