

# Research News

## Conferences and seminars

### Cambridge Assessment Conference

The inaugural Cambridge Assessment conference 'A Question of Confidence: Maintaining Trust in National Assessment Systems' took place at Robinson College on 17 October 2005. The main speakers were Baroness Onora O'Neill, Professor Barry McGaw, Dr Nicholas Tate and Professor Alison Wolf. The topical theme of the conference and the high calibre of speakers attracted over 200 delegates from the UK and around the world, representing schools, colleges, universities, awarding bodies and educational organisations.

### 10th Roundtable Conference, Melbourne, Australia

In October 2005 Sylvia Green was invited to give a keynote address at the 10th Roundtable Conference in Melbourne. This is an annual conference on student assessment and measurement issues and provides an opportunity to enhance the professional knowledge of delegates by sharing information about assessment and reporting practices in Australia as well as internationally. Sylvia's presentation was on: 'Harnessing technology in the brave new world: affordances and challenges in e-assessment'.

### 6th Annual Association for Educational Assessment-Europe Conference, Dublin

Jackie Greatorex, Irenka Suto and Sylvia Green hosted discussion groups at the AEA-Europe conference on *Assessment and Accountability* in November 2005. Topics included 'Gaining theoretical insights into the A-level and GCSE marking process' and 'International perspectives on assessment in vocational qualifications'.

### Transport House seminar

In March a seminar on *Variations in aspects of writing in 16+ examinations between 1980 and 2004* was presented by Cambridge Assessment at Transport House, London. The chair was Barry Sheerman, Chairman of the Select Committee on Education. *Variations in aspects of writing* is an extension to the research published by A.J. Massey & G. L. Elliott in 1996, which explored differences in written English in public examinations set in 1980, 1993 and 1994, by the inclusion of a further sample from an examination set in 2004. A copy of the report by A.J. Massey, G.L. Elliott and N.K. Johnson can be downloaded from:  
<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/research/aspectsofwriting>

### Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) research forum

In April IPPR, with the support of Cambridge Assessment and Select Education plc, presented the second research forum on 'Curriculum, Assessment and Pedagogy: Beyond the "standards agenda"'. This was the second event of a major project, *A New Agenda for Schools*. The event

provided an opportunity to think critically about the current relationship between curriculum, assessment and pedagogy in light of the latest evidence from the UK and abroad. Participants were asked to consider future long-term policy options with a view to creating a system which prioritises the need to reduce the attainment gap, broaden learning and make gains in attainment at Key Stage 1 more sustainable as pupils progress through Key Stages 2 and 3. The speakers included Sylvia Green from the Research Division.

### International Association of Educational Assessment Conference (IAEA)

Sylvia Green, Jackie Greatorex and Nicholas Raikes, along with other colleagues from Cambridge Assessment, presented papers at the IAEA conference in Singapore in May. The theme of the conference was 'Assessment in an Era of Rapid Change: Innovation and Best Practices'.

## Publication

*Reading, Writing, Thinking*, published by the International Reading Association in 2005, includes a chapter by Martin Johnson of the Research Division. 'Concepts of difficulty: A child's eye view', reports on a project that gathered qualitative data about children's perceptions of writing test stimuli. The book addresses the issues of the power of writing, the assessment of language and literacy development, adolescent literacy, beginning reading and writing, multiculturalism and language learning, and literacy and critical thinking.

'On-line mathematics assessment: The impact of mode on performance and behaviour' by Martin Johnson and Sylvia Green has been published on line in the *Journal of Technology, Assessment and Learning*. This can be downloaded from <http://www.jtla.org>

An article by John F. Bell and Eva Malacova, 'Changing boards: Investigating the effects of centres changing specifications for English GCSE', was published in the Spring 2006 issue of *Curriculum Journal*.

'Can a picture ruin a thousand words? The effects of visual resources and layout in exam questions' by Victoria Crisp and Ezekiel Sweiry will be published in *Educational Research* in June 2006.

## AssessNet

AssessNet, the Cambridge Assessment Network's online networking tool for worldwide assessment professionals, was launched on 31 March 2006. Log on now at <http://assessnet.org.uk> for the latest education news and resources, details of the Network's events, and the opportunity to network with colleagues via the discussion forums, chat rooms and other exciting features.