



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

How hard can it be? Issues and challenges in the development of a validation method for traditional written examinations

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Abstract

There is a wealth of theoretical work on validity. However, translating this into an operational method for validating assessments has not attracted nearly as much attention, largely because validation activities are painstaking and difficult. Evidence needed for validation depends on the proposed interpretations and uses of test scores. However, providing appropriate validity evidence is a non-trivial undertaking and involves substantial research effort, requiring multiple sources of evidence collected through a range of methods to address different facets considered important to validity.

This paper will provide an overview of the issues and challenges in the development, piloting and revision of a framework for validating traditional written examinations. Recent attempts to apply the framework have uncovered a number of difficult issues. For example: what conceptualisation of validity should be used; for whom is the framework intended; how should evidence for validity be presented and used; and can one framework and set of methods be applied satisfactorily to different types of qualifications and assessments.

The paper will discuss the extent to which the full methodology is practical operationally, whether a more streamlined approach may be necessary, and how much evidence is sufficient to consider an assessment valid.



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