



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

Practising what we preach: how do awarding bodies make use of psychological research methods?

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Abstract

Since many people's life chances are affected by the qualifications they obtain, it is crucial that examinations are fair. Reporting accurately what individuals know, understand, and can do is the holy grail of educational assessment. Awarding bodies therefore engage in a considerable amount of psychological research, exploring the validity and reliability of the assessments they develop and administer.

In this presentation I will explain how assessment researchers draw upon established psychological theories and apply some of the research techniques covered in the OCR A level Psychology syllabus. Self-reporting, experiments, observations, and correlation data are all used to investigate the *process* of assessment, in which human agency plays a substantial role. The impacts and effects of examinations on individuals and society also receive considerable attention from researchers. I will describe a range of recent research, including studies of: (i) the complexity of examiners' judgements of students' work; (ii) the relationships between aspects of emotional intelligence and academic attainment; and (iii) how students with dyslexia may be affected by some features of examination questions. I will argue that psychological research is of great practical value to the educational assessment community.



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