

Research News

Conferences and seminars

Cambridge Assessment's 6th biennial conference

The 6th biennial Cambridge Assessment conference took place in Cambridge on 10 October 2012 with 'Examining risk' as the theme. It brought together more than 120 experts from within the education and assessment community with speakers from a wide range of backgrounds to consider the principles of risk and how they might apply to assessment and qualification systems.

The relationship between risk communication and regulation was discussed by keynote speakers Professor Alastair Scotland, former Director of the National Clinical Assessment Service, and Professor Ragnar Löfstedt, Director of the King's Centre for Risk Management, King's College London. Both said that a simpler, clearer, more effective and more accountable regulatory landscape, together with transparent communication, helps to build trust and minimises risk.

Isabel Nisbet, former Ofqual Chief Executive and now of University of Cambridge International Examinations, and Mick Walker, former Executive Director of Education at the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, considered lessons learned from the national curriculum testing crisis of 2008.

Glenys Stacey of Ofqual and Dr Michelle Meadows of exam board AQA explored risk from the perspectives of regulator and exam board. Other panellists included: Amanda Spielman, ARK Schools and Ofqual; Russell Hobby, National Association of Head Teachers; Tim Oates, Cambridge Assessment; and David Skelton, Policy Exchange.

Further details and podcasts can be found at <http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Spotlight/Detail?tag=6thCAconference>

British Educational Research Association (BERA)

The BERA Annual Conference was held from 4–6 September 2012 at the University of Manchester. Colleagues from the Research Division and CIE presented the following papers:

Irenka Suto, Rita Nádas and Lucy Chambers: *An exploration of how independent research and project management skills can be developed and assessed among 16 to 19 year olds.*

Jackie Greateorex and Sanjana Mehta: *A method for comparing the demands of specifications.*

Rita Nádas, Irenka Suto and Rebecca Grayson: *"Analyse this" – How do teachers with differing subject specialisms interpret common assessment vocabulary?*

Martin Johnson and Beth Black: *Feedback as scaffolding: Senior Examiner monitoring processes and their effects on examiner marking.*

Tim Gill and Irenka Suto: *Students' and teachers' views and experiences of A level module re-sits.*

Victoria Crisp: *The teacher as examiner: How do teachers make judgements when marking coursework?*

Victoria Crisp and Sylvia Green: *The effects of the change from coursework to controlled assessment in GCSEs.*

Jackie Greateorex and Stuart Shaw: *The validity of teacher assessed Independent Research Reports contributing to Cambridge Pre-U Global Perspectives and Research.*

European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

In September Irenka Suto, Sanjana Mehta and Jackie Greateorex attended the ECER conference in Cadiz, Spain, and presented the following papers:

Irenka Suto: *Why is it so difficult to assess students' research reports? A model of the challenges facing teachers and external assessors.*

Sanjana Mehta: *How effective are curricula for 16 to 19 year olds as a preparation for university? An investigation of lecturers' views.*

Jackie Greateorex: *A method for comparing the demands of specifications.*

Association for Educational Assessment – Europe (AEA-Europe)

The AEA-Europe annual conference took place in Berlin in November with the theme of 'Assessment across the lifespan'. Several colleagues from Cambridge Assessment attended the conference and the following papers were presented:

Tim Oates: *"...I disagree with you at the level of principle...": contrasts and contradictions between assessment in 'academic' and 'vocational' qualifications.*

Beth Black: *The use of statistical approaches in maintaining standards in UK national examinations and the need for expert judgement.*

Rebecca Grayson: *The new A level A* grade in England: The challenge of measuring exceptional pre-university attainment.*

Jill Grimshaw: *Managing the unexpected: contingency planning and coping with crises.*

Stuart Shaw, Martin Johnson and Paul Warwick: *Understanding Assessment for Learning values and practices across diverse contexts.*

The following posters were also presented:

Nicky Rushton: *Comparing students' written performances – does an uneven performance across papers cause problems?*

Tim Gill: *Students' and teachers' views and experiences of A level module re-sits.*

Stuart Shaw and Helen Imam: *International learning and assessment through the medium of English: supporting teachers and students in multilingual educational contexts.*

EARLI SIG 1: Assessment and Evaluation

In August Gill Elliott and Carmen Vidal Rodeiro attended the sixth biennial meeting of EARLI SIG 1: Assessment and Evaluation in Brussels entitled 'Linking Multiple Perspectives on Assessment'. The main themes of the conference were formative and summative classroom assessment, large scale assessment and assessment policy.

Gill presented a paper on 'How multiple perspectives complicate comparability' and Carmen on 'Do different assessment routes (linear vs. modular) prepare students in the same way for further study?'

EARLI SIG 17: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Learning and Instruction

In September Martin Johnson attended the EARLI SIG 17 meeting at the Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Deventer, the Netherlands. The theme was 'Mixed methods for analysing educational interactions'. Martin presented on 'Technologically mediated communication: methods for exploring examiners' real-time feedback interactions'.

Further information on all conference papers can be found on the Cambridge Assessment website: http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Our_Services/Research/Conference_Papers

Publications

In October a Special Issue of *Research Matters* on validity was published. 'An approach to validation – Developing and applying an approach for the validation of general qualifications' describes a programme of research in which a framework for validation studies of general assessments was developed and applied to two International A level 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 14 of *Research Matters*:

- Bramley, T. & Dhawan, V. (2012). Estimates of reliability of qualifications. In: Q. He, & D. Opposs (Eds.), *Ofqual's Reliability Compendium*. Ch.7. Coventry: Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation.
- Chambers, L., Galaczi, E. & Gilbert, S. (2012). Test-taker familiarity and paired speaking test performance: Does it make a difference? *Research Notes*, **49**, 33–39.
- Crisp, V. (2012). An investigation of rater cognition in the assessment of projects. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, **31**, 3, 10–20.
- Crisp, V. & Green, S. (2012). Controlled assessments in 14–19 Diplomas: Implementation and effects on learning experiences. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, **18**, 4, 333–351.
- Crisp, V. & Shaw, S. (2012). Applying methods to evaluate construct validity in the context of A level assessment. *Educational Studies*, **38**, 2, 209–222.
- Johnson, M. & Black, B. (2012). What's going on? Analysing visual data to understand context-based decision making processes. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, **35**, 3, 243–250.
- Johnson, M. & Nádas, R. (2012). A review of the uses of the Kelly's Repertory Grid method in educational assessment and comparability research studies. *Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice*, **18**, 5, 425–440.
- Johnson, M., Hopkin, R. & Shiell, H. (2012). Marking extended essays on screen: Exploring the link between marking processes and comprehension. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, **9**, 1, 50–68.
- Shaw, S. Crisp, V. & Johnson, N. (2012). A proposed framework for evidencing assessment validity in large-scale, high-stakes international examinations. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policies and Practice*, **19**, 159–176.