

Statistical Reports

The Statistics Team Research Division

Four new reports have been added to the 'Statistics Report Series' on the Cambridge Assessment website since the publication of Issue 11 of *Research Matters*. The reports in this series provide statistical summaries of various aspects of the English examination system such as trends in pupil attainment, qualifications choice and subject uptake and provision at school.

The following reports, produced using national-level examination data, are available at http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/Our_Services/Research/Statistical_Reports:

- Statistics Report Series No. 25: Uptake of ICT and computing qualifications in schools in England 2007–2009
- Statistics Report Series No. 26: The accuracy of forecast grades for OCR A levels
- Statistics Report Series No. 27: Provision of GCE A level subjects 2010
- Statistics Report Series No. 28: Uptake of GCE A level subjects 2010

Research News

Conferences and seminars

Parliamentary Research Enquiry

Cambridge Assessment's seventh Parliamentary Research Enquiry seminar took place in the House of Commons in January. The event, chaired by Graham Stuart MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee, was jointly organised by Cambridge Assessment, the University of Cambridge's international exams group, and the University's Centre for Science and Policy.

Experts in neuroscience, psychology and education emphasised the importance of motivational and contextual influences, and the importance of active, directed learning in ensuring that a child's potential is realised. They agreed that neuroscience needs to have a bigger impact on policymakers than at present, and that the discourse needs to shift to a focus on children and learning, both in terms of cognitive and emotional development.

Speakers included Usha Goswami, Professor of Cognitive Developmental Neuroscience at the University of Cambridge, Robert Burden, Emeritus Professor of Applied Educational Psychology at the University of Exeter, and Trevor Robbins, Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience at the University of Cambridge.

Discussion spanned a number of topics including: the role that language plays in the early years; the importance of structures and support systems; whether the cognitive learning processes had determined the break points in education; and the age at which children should start school.

Cambridge Assessment's Parliamentary Research Enquiry series is designed to bring together a wide range of professionals in education to

look at 'big picture' topics and enable policy makers to access the knowledge of leading experts.

Podcasts of the event are available at www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk

5th UK Rasch User Group Meeting

In January Tom Bramley and Beth Black attended the 5th UK Rasch User Group meeting at the CEM Centre in Durham. The UK Rasch Users Group Meeting provides a forum for Rasch enthusiasts working in different fields to get together to share ideas and present research. The purpose of the group is to offer advice, support and encouragement to anyone interested in the Rasch model.

The Rasch Day itself was followed by a one day workshop on 'The R environment and estimation of the Rasch Model', tutored by Tima Croudace of the University of Cambridge and Jan Boehnke of the University of Trier.

American Educational Research Association (AERA)

The AERA annual conference took place in New Orleans in April with the theme of 'Inciting the social imagination: Education research for the public good'.

Irenka Suto and Victoria Crisp were invited to present two papers as part of a collaborative symposium with American colleagues on 'Rater cognition and its importance for score validity: Global perspectives and findings'.

Victoria gave a paper on 'An investigation of rater cognition in the assessment of projects', while Irenka presented on 'A critical review of research methods used to explore rater cognition'.