

technical aspects of the assessments which OCR offers and in the understanding of the statistical data which are and can be provided for all stages of the assessment process.

The ORT in its current form has been in existence since 2004 (there has been a small in-house research facility since the creation of OCR). The team is seven strong, six of whom are based in Cambridge, and is headed by an Assistant Director. Four of the team served their

apprenticeship in the Research and Evaluation division (the fore-runner of the Research Division) and can be fairly described as having over a quarter of a century of research experience between them. The somewhat narrower focus of their work is essential given the immediacy of the applicability of any results whether in the development, question setting and marking or awarding and post-awarding stages of the assessment process.

## OTHER NEWS

# Research News

## Conferences and seminars

### International Association for Educational Assessment

The 33rd annual conference of the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA) took place in Baku, Azerbaijan in September. The main purpose of the IAEA is to assist educational agencies in the development and appropriate application of educational assessment techniques to improve the quality of education. This year's conference was hosted by The State Students Admission Commission of the Republic of Azerbaijan and was attended by 343 delegates from 43 countries. The conference theme was: *The interdependence of national assessment systems and education standards*. The Assessment Research and Development (ARD) Division presented six papers – including a paper on *Promoting educational quality through national assessment systems* by ARD Group Director, Tim Oates and Research Division Director, Sylvia Green.

### British Educational Research Association

In September, 10 colleagues from the Research Division attended the British Educational Research Association (BERA) annual conference at the Institute of Education, University of London. A total of 11 papers were presented, reporting on a wide range of issues from vocational grading to how question features relate to marking accuracy.

### Royal Statistical Society

Carmen Vidal Rodeiro attended the Royal Statistical Society conference in York in July. The theme for 2007 was *Statistics and public policy making*. Around 200 presentations were given and specific themes included crime, education, trust in statistics, statistical legislation, and the way statistics contribute to policy.

### European Conference on Educational Research

Jackie Greatorex presented a paper – *Exploring how the cognitive strategies used to mark examination questions relate to the efficacy of examiner training* – at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER) in September at the University of Ghent. ECER is the annual meeting of the European Educational Research Association (EERA) which constitutes the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and similar organisations of the other European nations. Over 1000 delegates attended, mainly from Europe but some from farther afield e.g. University

of Zimbabwe, University of Japan and University of New York. About 880 papers were presented, and 30 symposia and 10 workshops took place.

### Journal of Vocational Education and Training conference

Martin Johnson attended the Journal of Vocational Education and Training 7th International Conference, University of Oxford, in July and presented a paper entitled: *Grading, motivation and vocational assessment*. He also presented a paper by Nadežda Novaković on *The influence of statistical data on panellists' decisions at Angoff awarding meetings*.

### Association for Educational Assessment – Europe

In November three colleagues from the Assessment Research and Development Division attended the annual conference of AEA-Europe in Stockholm and presented papers. The theme of the conference was *Assessment for educational quality*.

### Cambridge Assessment Conference

The 3rd Cambridge Assessment Conference took place at Robinson College, University of Cambridge, in October. The conference theme was *e-Assessment and its impact on education* and took a broad view of the potential of new technologies to improve assessment, with the purpose of identifying and promoting those innovations that will create valid assessments as well as educational benefits. The main speakers were Professor Andrew Pollard from the ESRC Teaching and Learning Research Programme, Institute of Education, University of London and Professor Richard Kimbell, Goldsmiths, University of London. Twelve discussion seminars enabled delegates to debate issues on a range of subjects within the main conference theme.

### Research Division seminar

In October a research seminar was held at Cambridge Assessment entitled: *How can qualitative research methods inform our view of assessment?* Professor Harry Torrance and Dr Helen Colley of the Education and Social Research Institute, Manchester Metropolitan University, and Martin Johnson of the Research Division gave presentations exploring the potential of qualitative research methods for understanding aspects of assessment that are difficult to capture through quantitative surveys and measurement. The presentations drew on projects funded by the ESRC and the LSDA to illustrate how a qualitative approach can inform our view of assessment.



## A date for your diary

As part of our 150th anniversary celebrations in 2008, Cambridge Assessment will host the 34th annual conference of the International Association for Educational Assessment (IAEA). The annual IAEA conference is recognised as a major event in assessment, bringing together leading assessment and education experts from across the world.

**Date** – Sunday 7 to Friday 12 September 2008.

**Venue** – the conference will take place in Cambridge, UK. The main conference sessions will be held at Robinson College, Cambridge University's newest college.

**Theme** – *Re-interpreting assessment: society, measurement and meaning.* Sub-themes will range from *Emerging trends and perspectives in assessment* to *Equality issues in assessment*.

**Keynote speakers** – Professor Robert J. Mislevy, University of Maryland, and Professor Dylan Wiliam, Institute of Education, University of London.

**Registration** – registration and 'call for papers' will open on 14 January 2008.

Further information can be found at:  
[www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/](http://www.iaea2008.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/).