Symposium
Quality in Vocational Assessment

Speakers:

Gill Stewart is responsible for qualifications development at SQA, including vocational and academic awards. She is a member of the EBCS for BBC Scotland and has served on boards for the Quality Assurance Agency and the UK Commission for Employment & Skills. http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/1667.2327.html

Lorna Unwin is a Professor Emerita of Vocational Education at the UCL Institute of Education. She has a background in journalism, teaching in further education and a long career in researching vocational education and training. In 2013 she was adviser to the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning (CAVTL). http://www.ioe.ac.uk/staff/LCEN/LCEN_42.html

James Morgan is Project Manager for Policy, Assessment, Statistics & Standards at SQA. He has conducted research, qualifications development and quality assurance projects at SQA. Previously, he worked in crop research and health technology assessment. https://goo.gl/FZEHsM

Ewart Keep is Professor of Education, Training and Skills at the Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance (SKOPE) Research Centre at the University of Oxford. He is a member of the Higher Education Funding Council's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/directory/professor-ewart-keep/

Hubert Ertl is Associate Professor of Higher Education at the Department of Education, University of Oxford and Fellow of Linacre College. Recent research has included work on transitions from vocational to higher education in a comparative perspective. http://www.education.ox.ac.uk/about-us/directory/dr-hubert-ertl/

Andrew Boyle is Associate Director for quantitative research at Alpha*Plus* Consultancy Ltd. He has worked for assessment bodies in the UK and government agencies. He was Head of Research at Ofqual and City & Guilds. http://www.alphaplusconsultancy.co.uk/about/the-team

Jeremy Benson is Executive Director for Vocational Qualifications at Ofqual. His previous roles include being Deputy Director at the Department for Education responsible for exams delivery, establishing Ofqual and sponsoring the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. https://www.gov.uk/government/people/jeremy-benson

Paul Newton is Research Chair at Ofqual. He was previously Professor of Educational Assessment at the Institute of Education and is first author of *Validity in Educational and Psychological Assessment* (with Stuart Shaw, 2014). https://www.linkedin.com/pub/paul-newton/12/394/b53

Who this Symposium is for:

This Association for Educational Assessment-Europe, one-day symposium, is hosted by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The AEA-Europe conference theme is 'Assessment and Social Justice'. This symposium elaborates the theme by exploring the contribution of quality in vocational assessment to social justice issues. Academics and practitioners working in the field of vocational assessment will discuss key issues in the quality of vocational assessments. AEA-Europe is seeking to develop its focus upon vocational assessment matters in the future and this first event will serve not only to engage with these fundamental issues in the field but to build a network of researchers and practitioners who will contribute to future AEA-Europe activities, with the aim of improving quality in assessment throughout Europe.

Overview

In a very important sense, vocational qualifications and their assessment are the general condition;, real life, and academic qualifications and their assessment are a slightly odd sub-set of the general case.

Vocational qualifications address diverse sectors (across the whole of industry in a complex modern economy), serve differing purposes (ranging for instance from licensing people to work in important occupations, to giving teenagers in school a 'flavour' of what it's like to work in an occupation), differ substantially in demand – for instance from 'entry level' courses for people who have left school with no qualifications to professional examinations at Master's level.

Correspondingly (and unsurprisingly), vocational assessment is diverse (including formal exams, assessment by observation, assignments, and many other methods). It is also innovative; technology being much more embedded than in academic assessment, for instance. It addresses novel constructs, such as competence, and has to resolve complex challenges, such as how to integrate results from very diverse assessment methods, and/or from units drawn from diverse paths and how to weight scoring from (say) an internally assessed, observational unit and a formal examination. Not least of the challenges facing vocational assessment is how or whether to grade vocational qualifications.

And so, it is unfortunate, given the importance of vocational qualifications and their assessment, that little research has looked into the key concepts in the area. This symposium sets out to tackle this omission. It seems to us that our vocational assessment symposium should address the following issues:

- What are the quality issues that are essential for vocational assessment to address? In particular, how can we develop an agenda to investigate these issues in an ongoing way;, independently of system factors (both in terms of political change and differences between different nations)?

- To what extent is vocational assessment exceptional? Is it that vocational assessment 'just needs to demonstrate validity and reliability like any other form of assessment' or is it that vocational assessment is based upon very different concepts to academic, and so methods and assumptions do not transfer across in a straightforward way?

- How can we build up a knowledge base and an ongoing research agenda? How can such activity be inclusive? How can we involve diverse stakeholders (researchers, teachers, learners, employers, Higher Education, etc.)? How can we build a Europe-wide agenda?

We have assembled a diverse group of speakers who have disparate interests and who bring a range of experiences to bear on important topics. The speakers are all

leaders in their fields and speak from a range of roles: UK academics, and regulators, European speakers from various countries.

The symposium is structured into a variety of sessions, with substantial input from the expert speakers, but also with plenty of space to interact and develop viewpoints in collaboration with fellow delegates.

Schedule

Time	Session	Presenter
09.00	Coffee and registration	
09.30	Welcome & Introduction to the Symposium	Gill Stewart
09.45	Is competence a useful concept?	Lorna Unwin
10.15	Opportunities and challenges of an integrated vocational system	James Morgan
10.45	Questions and discussion	
11.00	Break	
11.30	Defining and delivering quality in the light of employers' conceptions of skill and need	Ewart Keep
12.00	Vocational assessment in the context of stakeholder interests: assessment in the dual system training in Germany	Hubert Ertl
12.30	*To be confirmed*	Jeremy Benson & Paul Newton
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	Introduction to Discussion Group sessions	Andrew Boyle
14.15	Discussion Groups	
15.30	Break	
15.45	Plenary	Andrew Boyle
16.30	Workshop close	Gill Stewart

To book a place at this Symposium, please visit: http://www.aea-europe.net/index.php/about-the-glasgow-conference

This Symposium is sponsored by Alpha*Plus* and SQA.