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*A Quick Users Guide*

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## Editorial

*Steven Bakker*  
*AEA Europe President*



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### Welcome to this issue of the AEA-Europe newsletter.

Dear members of AEA-Europe,

I'm writing this three months after the Oslo conference, and by the time you read this four months will have passed since I had the privilege as the newly elected President of our Association to close this memorable event. I hope that for those who attended the memories of Oslo will be as good as mine. And, of course, I also hope that those who did not will now seriously consider not missing the next opportunity: Belfast 10-12 November 2011, with preconference workshops on Wednesday 9.

### Our mission

Our conferences are the main instrument we use to realize our mission, but by no means the only one. The Association is bubbling with energy. New Council members have taken office, full of fresh ideas, and committees have increased their ranks to deal with their many initiatives. There is more information about all of this later in this newsletter.

As an international consultant often travelling abroad and in touch with many of our members across Europe I know how important the existence of our organisation is - as a platform for meeting other professionals in our industry and as an opportunity for networking and professional development. The Council and its committees are working on a daily basis to design and provide such opportunities.

### Achievements

Since the acceptance of the Strategy Document during the Business meeting in Malta, Nov. 2009, several important steps forward have been taken. A new council election procedure was put in place to guarantee an open and democratic structure for our Association. We hired an Administrator to support the Executive Secretary and the Treasurer. We discussed a plan to update the website and set up a Marketing Committee. The Communication Committee worked on the next AEA-Europe issue of Cadmo, the Professional Development Committee launched the Webinars and the Standards Committee published its position paper 'Towards a European framework of Standards for Educational Assessment'.

### The future

All of these initiatives serve the purpose of realizing our mission. This mission will, however, only be sustainable if we can manage to become visible beyond our current recruitment circles and geographical catchment areas. That is why increasing our membership will be an important component of our efforts in the coming years. The Business Plan that we presented in Oslo unveiled ambitious target numbers: a doubling of our membership over the 5-year period 2010-2014 and a similar increase in attendance at the Annual Conference. Daring as they may be, these figures express two important thoughts. First, with the growing importance of educational assessment in

Europe, the question is not if there are so many potential members, but rather how to reach them. And second, to serve the needs of all members, individual, corporate, current and future, we need to establish a sufficient 'mass' to support a more professional approach in the services and benefits we offer to our members. This is why we are working with the Marketing and Communication Committee on a complete make-over of our web site, and developing strategies for member drives. That is why - next to their existing tasks - the Publication Committee (formerly the Communication Committee) is setting up a Doctoral Network and that is why the Standards and Professional Development Committee is working on putting the Standards Framework in practice and designing on-line support materials for members' professional development. To promote these initiatives, be visible and grow is currently at the forefront of our minds!

### Volunteers and Sponsors

The association has become what it is now thanks to the efforts of many volunteers. Thanks to their input we have been able to offer many services at no or low costs. We have been able to find generous sponsors for our main events, the Annual Conferences, often corporate members who are aware of the importance of our Association for the development of the educational assessment industry. Thanks to volunteers and sponsors we managed, while maintaining our independence, to accumulate funds and become financially strong. The coming years will be years of investment - investments in our web site, in member drives, in products with which we can reach out and promote our objectives. We hope that in a not too distant future the professional support which now consists of one part-time administrator can be increased. But the AEA-Europe will remain what it is: an association relying in the first place on the input of its members. I hope to meet many of you during one of our Conferences, committee meetings or on-line events!

### Steven Bakker, AEA-Europe President

### Note from the editor:

This issue of the newsletter launches an addition to our 'Work in Progress' section. We are including three reports from doctoral students. Whitney and Lucy are in the process of completing their Ph.D. studies and Chris has just had his thesis accepted with no corrections. His degree should be awarded in July. Reports on doctoral research will become a feature of the newsletter in forthcoming issues, to support the doctoral forum which was launched in Oslo.

We are also including more information about our council, both recently departed members and newcomers. We hope that you find this interesting.

The next issue of the newsletter will be in September of this year. All contributions are welcome and should be sent to [j.sewell@nfer.ac.uk](mailto:j.sewell@nfer.ac.uk) by the end of August.



## TELC language tests for university admission

*Sibylle Plassman*



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### The context

*telc* – language tests are in the middle of a test development project concerning tests for German (as L1) and Mathematics. Together with existing tests for English, these new tests will be used as part of a special admission procedure at universities in the German federal state of Northrhine Westfalia. The target group are would-be students who do not have the appropriate school-leaving certificate for entry into a university. In order to facilitate access to higher learning however, new legislation obliges the universities to take on applicants without formal qualification. They need to have successfully completed practical training for a job (2–3 years) plus at least three years' work experience. This entitles them to enroll for a Bachelor's degree in any subject if they pass the university's admission tests.

### What is happening?

From the point of view of test development, the challenge we face is as follows: The target group is a new one, so we do not have any experience to build on, nor entirely adequate groups for pre-testing. As of now we are pre-testing with first-year students who entered university in the regular way with the relevant school-leaving certificate. But what can we expect of young – or indeed not quite so young – people with a different background? Do they possibly have other areas of competence than their mainstream colleagues?

The aim of the new procedure is to include those who did not show their full potential at school. But the strong desire to allow for this possibility to give access – as shared by politics and universities alike – should not lead to admitting first-year students who disastrously fail when confronted with the demands of their university courses. So the examination board is faced with the ever-present question: What is a valid test in under these circumstances? What can we ask test takers to do; what is relevant for the purpose?

### Why inform members?

I would be interested in other members' experiences in this field. Do you offer this kind of alternative access to higher education? Do you think the target group should sit standard tests of the kind that others face in the form of final examinations in Germany (there is no tradition of admission tests at German universities)? Or is it fair to take account of the special circumstances in which the test takers find themselves and to develop different kinds of tasks for them?

Our solution to this is to indeed provide a test which is different from standard formats used at schools. In mathematics the main point is to test general understanding of mathematical principles whereas the schools' focus lies in correct calculation. In German, we do not expect analysis of texts with regard to stylistic devices and the like, but rather try to find out whether the test takers are able to read and understand a complex text.

#### More Information

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Information about our work: [www.telc.net](http://www.telc.net)



## Success in the US: Are Cambridge assessments good preparation for university study?

*Stuart Shaw, University of Cambridge International Examinations*



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#### The context

The 'Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing' (AERA/APA/NCME 1999, p.11) state that test validation is the "joint responsibility of the test developer and test user." Consequently, there are a number of key questions which test developers and users should ask of any test. The research described here addresses two of these questions in terms of consequential and predictive validity evidence:

- What effects do the test and test scores have on various stakeholders? (evidence based on the consequences of testing)
- What external evidence is there outside of the test scores themselves that the test is fair? (evidence based on relations to other variables)

As part of the continuing programme to update and refine its study of the impact of a range of international assessments, University of Cambridge International Examinations (Cambridge) has undertaken a series of studies investigating (a) assessment impact on a range of U.S. stakeholders and (b) assessment ability to prepare students well for continued studies in U.S. colleges and universities.

#### What is happening

The focus of the impact study has been on: the profile of the impact study participants (teachers and students); Cambridge washback on preparation content, methods, skills, activities and materials; perceptions of Cambridge test fairness, pressures, likes and dislikes; and a summary of impact study face-to-face data on test difficulty and validity.

Data has been collected on an opportunity sample of five case study high schools (St. Augustine; Brentsville; Rockledge; Gainesville; and Potomac) and two universities (University of Florida and Macalester College) using a range of impact data collection instruments including questionnaires; sets of semi-structured interview/focus group protocols; and classroom observation analysis instruments.

The conclusions drawn from the impact work will be triangulated with findings from a parallel predictive validity study which takes as its focus a case study approach. The aim of the predictive research is to ensure that the four year Cambridge curriculum and exams prepare students as well as Advanced Placement (a staple in U.S. education for over fifty years) and the International Baccalaureate for continued studies in U.S. colleges and universities.

The predictive research uses data collected from three year's worth of students enrolled at Florida State University. The data include information about each student's performance at high school, educational programme followed, ethnicity, gender and first year Grade

Point Average (GPA). Multilevel modelling has been applied to the data to investigate the relationship between the variables, and in particular to determine which are the best indicators of academic success at university.

#### Why inform members

With international examinations of ever higher stakes, awarding bodies are increasingly required to accept responsibility for the influence of their tests on a broad range of stakeholders and educational beneficiaries. There exists, therefore, a requirement to make every systematic effort to ensure that the tests achieve a positive influence on general educational processes and on individuals affected by the test results. Impact and predictive validity investigations provide awarding bodies with greater clarity regarding their own assessments in terms of "what goes on while a program is in progress" and "the end results of the program" (Weiss, 1998, p.334-335).

#### More information

It is hoped that the outcomes of the research will be reported on at the AEA-Europe conference in 2011. American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education. 1999. Standards for educational and psychological testing. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.  
Weiss, C (1998) Evaluation. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.



## Two State Languages University Entrance Tests: Standardization and Alignment

*Mikalai Fiaskou, Republican Institute for Knowledge Control, rikz@unibel.by*



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#### The context

In accordance with the constitution there are two state languages in Belarus: Belarusian and Russian. They are both studied at school on a parity basis. Their syllabuses and instructional material content are almost the same, as these Slavonic languages have much in common. For those who want to enter any higher educational establishment the admissions test in either of the two state languages is a must. To provide fair access to higher education the Republican Institute for Knowledge Control, which is responsible for the development of admissions tests, administers tests across 14 school subjects in both Russian and Belarusian. This means that test-takers are instructed in their native language. Alongside this we do our utmost to align the content and structure of the two state language tests (the languages have similar (not identical) morphology and syntax). For this purpose we have defined and aligned the conditions under which the tests are given (time, place, date, etc.), the constructs and the aspects of the curricula we want to be covered by the tests, the number of test items, their formats and difficulty levels. As a result, the two state language tests, designed to assess native language proficiency, have a strong match between the respective items. However, some teachers, HEIs entrants and their parents want the tests to be completely alike regardless of the standards, curricula, teaching and learning and peculiarities of the linguistic systems.

#### What is happening?

Three times a year we conduct trial testing in order to assess the capacity of each question or task to distinguish between those who achieve at a high level and those who do not and to prepare a test blueprint. While conducting trialling we offered test-takers identical items in Belarusian and Russian languages (we have translated them in two languages, so that they haven't differed in difficulty or assessed aspects) in order to define the possible need for further alignment between the two state languages' test items. The results were then compared and discussed. The content analysis revealed the same level of competence in a range of topics in both languages. We expected that there should be greater agreement between items' performance, but it came as a surprise that test-takers in the Russian or Belarusian language showed huge differences in the performance on some identical items, which were designed to assess the same morphological and syntactic rules, and grammatical structures. The subsequent item analysis helped to define the reasons for these items' underperformance either in the Russian language test or in the Belarusian one. The reasons are complex and include test coaching (when even slightly altered items result in high failure rates), different Russian and Belarusian textbooks' content and instructional material layout, trends typical for either of the two languages. The item's performance is related to the teaching and learning process, classroom practices and students learning, educational standards and the particular linguistic system's peculiarities.

Further research is considered worthwhile to investigate potential ways of aligning the two state language tests. Errors creep in if assessed aspects are not chosen correctly.

#### Why inform members?

In a multicultural society fair access to higher education is likely to attract considerable political and educational attention. As assessment can exert a more powerful effect on teaching and learning than any other policy component, any change must be considered carefully. The extent of agreement between test items of two related languages should be investigated thoroughly with proper attention paid to every aspect.

#### More information

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## Trust in examinations

Lucy A. Simpson,  
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*"Trust is a vulnerable and valuable commodity, vaunted in the marketplace, acknowledged in every profession, yet perniciously difficult to quantify."*

(Thom, Hall, & Pawlson, 2004, p.124).



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### The context

Trust has been recognised as being central to the credibility of examination systems. Examination results are a form of 'currency'- and like all currencies they must be trusted by their users in order to hold any meaning within a social system (William, 1996).

In England, public confidence in examinations has increasingly attracted the government's attention. Indeed, in 2008 legislation was passed to create the independent watchdog Ofqual (the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulation). Since its launch, Ofqual has conducted a two-year Reliability Programme, looking at the consistency of public examinations, and factors which may affect the reliability of results<sup>1</sup>. Other government commissioned research has involved a longitudinal survey of stakeholder's perceptions of examinations in general<sup>2</sup>. However, there is no research to date that exclusively focuses upon the concept of trust in assessment. Nothing is known about what it means to trust in examination systems, what individuals base their trust judgements on, and what could be done to improve trust.

One area of social life where trust-based research is well-established is the medical profession. Whilst some researchers have been concerned with trust in the doctor-patient relationship (Anderson & Dedrick, 1990), others have examined trust in health-care systems (Straten, Friele, & Groenewegen, 2002). In terms of the latter, tools to measure trust in health-care systems have been developed, which have enabled key determinants of trust to be identified (Calnan & Sanford, 2004). In addition, some commentators have suggested that such tools may be helpful in predicting patient behaviour e.g., consulting "alternative practitioners" (Straten et al, 2002). Research in the medical profession highlights some potential benefits of studying trust in the context of examinations.

### The doctoral research

The primary aim of my research is to explore stakeholder trust in the A-level examination system in England. I chose to focus upon A-levels (as opposed to GCSE or vocational qualifications) because they are of often thought of as the 'gold standard' of assessment in England and are a student's main route to university, college or employment.

Definitions of trust are thought to be highly context dependent. It is recommended that where little is known about how trust functions qualitative research should be conducted to explore how respondents view trust and trusted behaviour (Goudge & Gilson, 2005). Thus, the first phase of my research entailed conducting focus groups with four key stakeholders – students, teachers, admissions officers for Higher Education and the general public. In each of the focus groups, participants were asked to discuss what they understood by trust, in general, and to draw upon their own experiences to describe situations that had led them to build or lose trust in the A-level system.

I am currently in the second phase of my research, which aims to build upon the findings from the focus groups to develop a scale to measure trust in the A-level examination system. I intend to administer the scale to key stakeholders to generate data that can be used to explore the relationship between different variables and overall trust levels. For example, does trust determine an individual's likelihood to appeal against results? Testing the scale for reliability and validity will, of course, be a key part of this phase.

### Potential impact

A validated tool to measure trust in the A-level examination system could be adapted to suit other qualifications and contexts. Such a tool could be used to monitor trust levels, identify aspects of an examination system where trust is particularly lacking, and identify variations of trust between key stakeholders.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/research-reports/92-articles/20-reliability> for more information.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/news-and-announcements/130/240> for more information.

**Supervisors:** Professor Jo-Anne Baird, University of Bristol (Committee member)  
Dr Lisa Lucas, University of Bristol

**Funded by:** The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

Do you know of any other research on trust or distrust in examinations? Can you think of any theories of trust that may be relevant to Lucy's research? Would you like to hear more about Lucy's research? If yes, please don't hesitate to contact Lucy at [Lucy.Simpson@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:Lucy.Simpson@bristol.ac.uk)



## Assessment for Learning – doctoral research in process

Whitney Wall Bortz  
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### The Research

This Ph.D. research explores teachers' practises of formative assessment in secondary mathematics classrooms in Belfast, Northern Ireland (UK) and also Los Angeles, California (USA). In doing so, the aim is to generate insights into how teachers' assessment choices are influenced by the policy context as well as the teachers' background and beliefs about learning and assessment. A clearer picture of what is actually happening in classrooms will reveal the congruence (or lack thereof) of practice and policy. This may inform future judgments of how best to work with teachers to bring forth positive change in the use of classroom assessments. Furthermore, the question can be raised of whether change is always needed.

### Methods

- Questionnaires to all school staff addressing their perceptions of learning and assessment
- Pre-observation interviews with participating teachers about perceptions and practice
- One-month of classroom observations with two mathematics teachers in each of two schools in Northern Ireland and two mathematics teachers in each of two schools in Los Angeles.
- Post-observation reflective interviews with participating teachers
- Focus Groups with students of ages 11 – 14

### The context

Assessment continues to generate debate amongst researchers, politicians and practitioners. Many have warned that standardized, high-stakes assessments are ineffective in the promotion of learning and may even have detrimental effects on students and teachers (Moss, 2008; Nichols and Berliner, 2005). Yet global pressures continue to run high to raise student achievement on such measures (Koretz, 2007; Fisher, 2008). In recent years, this has been particularly true in the US, where end-of-the-year assessments have been the primary criteria for evaluating teachers and schools. Schools in which students do not meet predetermined targets face the risk of financial consequences, even closure. Somewhat similarly, the government in England set targets for schools aligned to results on external assessments at key stages which can determine future funding and sustainability. In Northern Ireland, on the other hand, there has been a movement to lessen the focus on externally marked exams in the primary and middle years. The Key Stage 3 end-of-the-year exams are no longer mandatory, and teachers are instead encouraged to focus on the use of Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies. While AFL is not compulsory, the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland states that they 'strongly recommend' its use (2007), and many schools have implemented AFL practice across years 8 – 10.

Researchers in both the UK and the US have called for a shift in focus from summative assessments to formative assessments, but a variety of interpretations of what actually constitutes formative assessment can be found in research, policy documents and the opinions of teachers. This complicates formative assessment research, as educators have different ideas of the definition of formative assessment. In the US, for example, many schools have adopted 'formative assessment' initiatives that involve regular use of mini-summative exams, but some researchers would argue that these are not examples of formative assessment (Stiggins, 2002). Despite a variety of debates, a unifying characteristic of many interpretations of formative assessment is that it involves feedback on performance given to the students and to the teacher. This feedback can inform the teaching and learning activities and ultimately contribute to improved student learning.

### What are the directions of this Ph.D. research?

As Black and Wiliam (1998) noted, classrooms are often treated as 'black boxes': attention from the research and policy communities focuses on inputs and outputs with insufficient attention to what is actually happening inside. Therefore, exploration of the data is currently underway and aims to shed light upon various existing approaches to formative assessment. Of interest is how these teachers' practices of formative assessment compare to the ideas of its practice as represented in research. In addition, attention will also be given to how practice is influenced by factors such as policy, teacher beliefs and background and the mathematics context.

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Whitney Wall Bortz is currently working on her PhD degree at Queen's University, Belfast under the supervision of Jannette Elwood.

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## An Item Response Theory Approach to the Maintenance of Standards in Public Examinations in England

*Chris Weadon*



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#### The Research

The study draws on modern measurement theory to explore alternative methods for maintaining standards in A-levels and GCSEs. My particular interest is in implementing assessment designs that allow the use of Item Response Theory approaches in frequentist and Bayesian frameworks. In the course of the PhD I combined the exploration of experimental designs with IRT modelling. The study proposes a number of changes that can be made to current national assessment models to make them more flexible and more robust.

#### Methods

Rasch  
Multi-Class Mixture Rasch Models  
OPLM  
Item Response Theory  
Testlet Response Theory  
IRT methods of test-equating

#### Context

Every year outcomes from public examinations in the UK rise: politicians congratulate pupils on their hard earned achievement; the media questions whether this achievement is real; those responsible for administering the examinations defend their standards; various subject councils and employers decry the failings of candidates with high grades; admissions officers from the elite universities report their struggle with the decrease in discrimination in grades achieved; and academics debate what it means to compare standards from one year to the next. At present no comprehensive or coherent evaluation can be made as to whether examination standards in the UK are being maintained from year to year.

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### Conferences

**NCME 2011 Annual Meeting & Training Sessions**

April 7 – 11, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA  
<http://www.ncme.org/meeting/index.cfm>

**AERA 2011, "Inciting the Social Imagination: Education Research for the Public Good"**

April 8 – 12, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA  
<http://aera.net/2011AnnualMeeting.htm>

**EDULEARN11, International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies**, July 4 – 6, Barcelona, Spain,

<http://www.iated.org/edulearn11/?gclid=CKL M8M6t6KcCFVUS3wod7muEag>

**EARLI 2011, "Education for a Global Networked Society"**

August 30 – September 3, Exeter, United Kingdom  
[http://www.earli2011.org/nqcontent.cfm?a\\_id=1](http://www.earli2011.org/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=1)

**British Educational Research Association**

September 6 – 8, 2011, Institute of Education, London UK  
<http://www.bera.ac.uk/>

**ISDDE Conference 2011, "Design and Development: Transforming STEM Learning"**

September 12-15, Boston, USA,  
<http://www.isdde.org/isdde/boston2011/index.htm>

**ECER 2011, "Urban Education"**

September 13 – 16, Berlin, Germany  
<http://www.eera-ecer.eu/ecer/ecer-2011-berlin/>

**ATP Europe 2011, "Growing talent in Europe. Gaining Advantage through Assessment"**,

September 28 – 30, Prague, Czech Republic,  
<http://www.eatpconference.eu.com/>

**IAEA 2011, "Assessment and the Challenges of Globalization"**

October 23 – 28, Manila, Philippines  
<http://www.iaea2011.com/>

**AEA-Europe Annual Conference 2011, "Assessment and Opportunity to Learn"**

November 10 – 12, Belfast, Northern Ireland,  
<http://www.aea-europe.net/page-293.html>

**New Mexico Higher Education Assessment and Retention Conference**

Winter/spring 2012, Albuquerque, NM, USA,  
<http://www.nmsu.edu/NMHEAR/>

**AEA-Europe Annual Conference 2012**

November, Berlin, Germany

### Members' News

Alison Wood has recently been appointed to a post as 'Head of Education Policy' at AQA.

Tim Oates has been appointed as Chair of the expert group for the current curriculum review in England.

Jo-Anne Baird gave her inaugural lecture as Professor of Education Assessment at the University of Bristol on 17th March; in October she will take up post as Chair and Director of Oxford University's Centre for Educational Assessment, which was established through a donation by Pearson.

### Other News

**Multidimensional Item Response Theory course (MIRT)** 9-12 May 2011

The course is being organized and run in The Netherlands by RCEC [www.rcec.nl](http://www.rcec.nl)

The course instructor is Mark Reckase from Michigan State University (USA). Course content will address the theory and practice of MIRT using his book 'Multidimensional Item Response Theory' (2009)

The venue will be the University of Twente, in Enschede, Netherlands, [www.utwente.nl/en](http://www.utwente.nl/en)

The course fee is €650, which includes costs for coffee, tea and lunches.

For questions about the organization of the course you can contact Birgit Olthof.

E: [rcec@gw.utwente.nl](mailto:rcec@gw.utwente.nl) Tel: 003153 489 3555

For questions about the content of the course you can contact Theo Eggen or Piet Sanders

E: [theo.eggen@cito.nl](mailto:theo.eggen@cito.nl) Tel: 003126-3521468.

E: [piet.sanders@cito.nl](mailto:piet.sanders@cito.nl) Tel: 003126-3521414

The journal 'Assessment in Education: principles, policy and practice' is offering free access throughout April.

### Webinars

**The SPD Committee has arranged three further webinars as follow:**

1. Mary Pitoniak - Advantages and Disadvantages of Different Item Types in National Assessment – Thursday, April 21st 2011 h.15.00 (London time)
  2. R. Murphy - Some Challenges Involved in Assessing Professional Learning – May 19th – h.11.00 (London time)
  3. Fabienne van del Kleij - Effectiveness of Feedback in a Computer based Assessment for Learning – June 16th 2011 - h. 11.00 (London time)
- Please look at the website or contact Antonella Poce ([poce@uniroma3.it](mailto:poce@uniroma3.it)) if you need more details.



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### Chris Whetton

The 2010 conference of the association saw the handover of the presidency from Chris Whetton to Steven Bakker. Steven paid tribute to Chris' years of service to the association, making it clear that he has been involved from the very earliest days, dating back to the planning meeting which took place in 1998 as a result of the IAEA encouragement of regional assessment organisations. The inaugural meeting of what was then the European Association for Educational Assessment (EAEA) took place during the 1999 25th IAEA conference in Bled, Slovenia, with the goal of acting 'as a platform for discussion of developments in educational assessment in Europe, fostering co-operation and facilitating liaison between organisations and persons active in educational assessment across the whole of Europe'. Twelve years on, much of this goal has been realised, with interest generated not only in Europe but across the wider world of educational assessment – with no small thanks to Chris.



In January 2000, the association was officially formed – as AEA-Europe – in Arnhem in The Netherlands. Chris, along with Steven and Emma, signed the constitution in the presence of a Dutch notary.



Chris' original role was as Treasurer of the association, an office he held for six years before succeeding Emma Nardi as the second president of the association in 2006. These titles disguise some of the hard work that went into the early years: conference venues had to be researched by the council for the first four years. This saw Chris and Emma tramping around Krakow knee deep in snow to find a suitable venue, but not all the choices resulted in 'lean and mean' accommodation: at the first conference, in Prague in 2000, Chris ended up in a suite used by Brezhnev, including a living room, two balconies, a dining room, servants' kitchen and a cloakroom, along with the expected bedroom (perhaps a precursor to the 2010 Oslo conference where certain delegates ended, by chance, in the luxurious surroundings of the Ladies' Corridor!).

Chris has attended every council meeting since the inauguration of the association, going north (Oslo and Umeå), east (Bucharest and Hisar), South (Malta, Naples and Rome) and west (Dublin and Belfast) to pursue the aims of the association and move it forward. Some of the resulting innovations of which Chris is particularly proud are the development of the new researcher award, accreditation for professional development, poster presentations, discussion

groups, pre-conference workshops and the conference dinners – including opera singers in Frascati and food served (according to one of Emma's students) in ashtrays in Lyons. He also set up and chaired the Communications committee (now Publications and communications). This led to the special editions of Cadmo and these newsletters among other things.

This all might make Chris seem very formal and serious, but behind the suit a warm and empathetic heart beats. He befriends people easily but that doesn't prevent him from teasing them (as Christina can testify) and his dry and ironic sense of humour can sometimes be misunderstood (ask anyone who was at the Malta conference!). The members of the communications committee also attest to his long-suffering patience when confronted by an opinionated and noisy group of women! His extraordinary sense of direction (both literal and metaphorical) provides answers to the "where are we" and "where are we going" questions, be they about the association's aims or a place that he's never visited before (usually with encyclopaedic knowledge of local places of interest). He's also more adventurous than some people may guess – including caravan trips around Europe, raft building and racing on the Eton Boating Lake, and attempting cross country skiing – spurred on by Christina. The bruises that lasted for a month afterwards convinced him that this was not the sport for him – appreciation of fine wine and food is the sort of leisure activity he prefers, along with walks with his dogs, Bella and Bertie. We wish him many happy years enjoying the AEA-E conferences as a delegate with no council responsibilities. He deserves it!



**Julie Sewell, Guri A. Nortvedt and Christina Wikström**

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## Council news

### Farewell to Christina Wikström

There is an old saying: "If you want to get something done, ask the busiest person you know to do it." Busy people get things done. This applies spectacularly to Christina Wikström, who was an AEA-Europe Council member from 2001 and the Executive Secretary for four years from 2006 to 2010. Christina stepped down from the Council last year, having made a great contribution to the Association and its successful growth.

Christina lives and works in Umeå, so is one of the most northerly members of the association. There she balanced her professional work in assessment, her work for AEA, her home life and her hobbies, as only a busy person can.

She worked in the department for Educational Measurement at Umeå University, where her interests were in investigating the validity of grading of students in Swedish schools. Indeed, during her time on the Council, Christina (as a busy person) completed and was awarded her doctorate for a thesis on the consequences of using criterion-referenced measurement for both educational evaluation and selection purposes. This had important implications for the Swedish education system, to such an extent that the Swedish Minister of Education rang Christina to congratulate her and discuss the thesis. Unfortunately, Christina (as a busy person) was celebrating her award at a party at the time and found it a little difficult to hold the discussion.

It was an early paper on validity that first brought Christina to an AEA conference – and then she was hooked - becoming a Council member in 2001 and subsequently agreeing (as a busy person) to become the Executive Secretary. In this role, Christina improved and developed the website and improved the communication with members through mailings and web-based submission systems. Christina also organised the 2007 AEA conference in Stockholm, which was one of the largest and most successful held. The conference dinner with its drinking song and Abba tribute band were highlights in a conference sequence with high expectations. Christina would like to be remembered for initiating the conference post-dinner dancing tradition.

In addition to her work and her Council duties, Christina (as a busy person) has managed to do more important things. She owns a horse and rides regularly. Not content with this, she trains her horse in dressage, which could be described as getting the horse to dance elegantly.



She competes and (of course as a busy person) organises dressage competitions for other riders. She has three lively sons and a dog and husband to care for and has managed to bring some of these to AEA events. Not the dog – it stays home and understandably pines for her, missing the runs which Christina (as a busy person) takes him on.

Away from home, at AEA meetings all over Europe (as a busy person) Christina also ran, braving the local hazards. For example, when she had her bottom pinched by a street urchin in Naples, she managed to be both outraged and pleased.

The AEA Council will miss Christina's contributions and can only thank her for them and for her dedication over the eight years she served. As a busy person, she still has much to do, but has promised to keep involved in AEA; she will be a member of the Communications Committee. She has a fine record of attending every AEA conference and intends to maintain this. So you are likely to see her at future conferences, either in the meeting or (as a busy person) running on the streets around the venue.

**Chris Whetton**

**Eduardo Cascallar**

During our last Council meeting in January this year Eduardo Cascallar announced that due to various other commitments and workload he unfortunately could no longer make himself available for the Council. Eduardo has been serving on the Council since November 2004. As a Council member he started the discussion on standards for good practice and the Association's responsibility to develop a standpoint in this matter, which eventually led to the preparation of the AEA-E Standards Framework. Among his many other contributions are his involvement in the review of conference papers and representing our Association at the NCME. On behalf of the Association and its Council I would like to thank Eduardo for his input and am happy to know that, as a member, he promises to remain active and continue to contribute.

**Steven Bakker**



## Council news

*We welcome two new officers to the council of the Associations, Kathleen Tattersall and Sarah Maughan.*

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### New Vice-President

We are extremely fortunate to have as our new Vice-president, Kathleen Tattersall, from England.

Kathleen has a distinguished history in educational assessment.

After a period teaching in both secondary (History specialist) and primary schools she went on to join an awarding body for school leaving certification (CSE) and later became Chief Executive of five boards, including two created from mergers which she led.



At national level in the UK, Kathleen has researched differentiation in 16+ examinations, was involved in the creation of The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in 1988, and the new A-levels in 2002. She retired as Director General of AQA, the largest of the three English exam boards, in 2003. She was appointed first Chair of the Chartered Institute of Educational Assessors (UK), the first Chair of new English Regulator of qualifications and tests (Ofqual), 2008-10 and has a wide experience of working at policy level with Ministers and Government departments.

Kathleen has particular interests in equality issues in assessment and the role of teachers as assessors. She says: 'It's a privilege to have been appointed to the role of Vice-President and I'm delighted to have the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of our vibrant and important Association. I hope that people will feel free to contact me with any ideas they have for improvement of how we conduct our business - I would very much welcome dialogue with individual members.'

We asked Kathleen and Sarah some questions about themselves. Here are Kathleen's answers to some of them:

#### Best / favourite career moments?

- Seeing my research into differentiation published as Examinations Bulletin 42.
- Seeing GCSE come into being after long years of prevarication on the part of Government.
- Leading prestigious awarding bodies such as JMB, NEAB and AQA, the latter two formed from mergers.
- Retiring unscathed!

#### Worst career moments?

- At an early stage of my career attempting to defend an impossible situation when one of the awarding bodies I was associated with had made a bad mistake and learning that being open about mistakes is always the best policy.

- 2002 A-level problems – stressful media attention, Select Committee and Tomlinson enquiry, even though my organisation emerged unscathed. Loss of confidence in the system is always difficult to recover.

#### What do you think are the most important aspects of assessment? Where/how does assessment do most good?

- Most important to remember that assessment should benefit students, whatever secondary benefits assessment might bring, such as information about group, school, teacher performance, the nation's performance and their effect on policy decisions.
- Teacher involvement in assessment enables assessment to impact on future learning. It is part of the virtuous circle of learning – evaluation- strategies for future learning; in that sense it is at the heart of raising standards for individuals, schools and the nation.

#### What would you hope to see AEA-Europe achieve in the next 2 years? 10 years?

- The strengthening of the assessment community, whether researchers or practitioners across Europe; encouraging the next generation of practitioners to be proactive and facilitate their continued professional development; the continued sharing of experience and expertise; a growing influence within each of our countries on proactive and policy making. Growing the AEA to embrace more assessment related institutions will be a step towards more evidence-based policy decisions.

#### What would you like people to remember you for at AEA-Europe?

- Enabling colleagues to develop and grow, facilitating professional cooperation and personal friendships, reaching out to those on the brink of the Association and encouraging them to play a fuller role.

#### What do you most value in AEA-Europe?

- Professional and personal friendships. I remained an individual member of the Association after my retirement from AQA because I enjoyed the company of colleagues from across Europe, particularly at the annual conferences.

#### What are you hoping to bring to your new role?

- Experience, energy, an empathy with people from all backgrounds and a belief that all of us can achieve more than we ever believe if given the opportunities and encouragement to do so.

#### What you most looking forward to at the next conference?

- Meeting old friends, getting to know existing members better and welcoming new participants.



## Council news

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### New Executive Secretary

Sarah Maughan has taken on the formidable role of Executive Secretary of the Association.

Sarah has a 1st class degree in psychology from University of York (and was top in her year) and a Masters in Educational Assessment, a course jointly run by Cambridge Assessment and University of Bristol.



Sarah taught English as a Foreign Language for six years in Turkey, Yemen and Sri Lanka. She then worked for ten years at Cambridge Assessment from 1996 to 2006. During this time Sarah was initially in the Research Department working on National Curriculum tests among other things, and then moved into the international division, ultimately as Deputy Director of International Curriculum and Development. She worked at the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics for one year before joining the National Foundation of Educational Research for England and Wales (NFER) in 2009. Sarah began at NFER as Head of Assessment Policy and Development but was soon appointed to her current post of Director of Research across the foundation as a whole.

Here are Sarah's answers to some of our questions:

#### Best / favourite career moments?

- Making papier-mâché masks in the garden at the British Council in Sri Lanka with a group of children who were about 10 years old.
- Leading the development of the Cambridge International Primary Programme: a complete package with schemes of work, recommended books, formative assessments, summative assessments, teacher professional development – and getting positive feedback from schools.

#### Worst career moments?

- Being evacuated from Yemen during the civil war in 1994 – leaving behind all our possessions and our kitten.
- Taking out a full page advert in a national newspaper for the education organisation I worked for, with limited advertising budget, and getting the URL for our website wrong! Another competitor organisation then bought the incorrect URL to be 'helpful' but refused to let us buy it off them!

#### What do you think are the most important aspects of assessment?

#### Where/how does assessment do most good?

- I genuinely believe that teachers need to know what their pupils have learned and what they have not yet got in order to plan effective lessons. Good teaching cannot take place

without good assessment. Assessment is about ensuring that all pupils are making progress and being presented with ideas and skills that are appropriate for their stage of learning. Good assessment is about fairness, access to opportunity and progression and development for all learners.

#### What would you hope to see AEA-Europe achieve in the next 2 years? 10 years?

I see two distinct strands to the way the Association should develop.

- Firstly, I would like to see the Association being more useful for its current members. I would really like to see more of the members get involved in the work of the Association and working together more closely than they currently do. The Association should be about building networks that mean we are all better at doing our jobs. Membership of the Association should be about much more than attendance at the conference.
- The second strand is about increasing the size of the membership so we have a wider resource to call on, from across the whole of Europe.

#### What would you like people to remember you for at AEA-Europe?

- I hope I will be remembered for bringing people together more and encouraging further sharing, such as through the new website we are planning to develop.

#### What do you most value in AEA-Europe?

- The opportunity to talk to assessment experts about how they have addressed issues that I am grappling with, and what worked well and how they would do things differently.

#### What are you hoping to bring to your new role?

- It's difficult to follow Christina in this role as she did such a good job of it! I am only now beginning to realise just how much time and effort she must have given to the Association. I am hoping that I will be able to maintain the standards that Christina has established.

#### What you most looking forward to at the next conference?

- Finding out about new developments happening around Europe and new approaches to assessment that I can use in my own job.

Compiled by Juliet Sizmur and Bernadetta Brzyska



## Council and committees

*Other members of the council and their responsibilities:*

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#### Steven Bakker:

As the president of the Association I see my role as providing leadership to the Council and working with them on implementing our Strategic Plan. A daunting task, as we set ambitious growth numbers. We hope to achieve these by providing more and better services to members, and actively reaching out to areas where we are yet less visible. Our Committees are instrumental in achieving these goals. Personally I have been actively involved in the Professional Development Committee and acting as the chair since 2008. It is fun to work with inspired colleagues on professional development opportunities from which members directly benefit, such as the accreditation scheme, the pre-conference workshops and our webinars. I also act as the linking pin between the Council and the group that is working on the Standards Framework. And last but not least I liaise with the Committee consisting of German members that is responsible for the organisation of our 2012 Annual Conference.



#### Professional Development Committee

- Andrew Watts (UK)
- Frans Kleintjes (NL)
- Alastair Pollit (UK)
- Antonella Poce (IT)
- Rosalind Duhs (UK)

#### Standards Framework Drafting Group:

- Gerben van Lent (NL)
- Saskia Wools (NL)
- Andrew Watts (UK)

#### Kiril Bankoff:

In the AEA-E Council I am responsible for the annual conferences. I am working on a Handbook for organizing AEA-E conferences. It collects the documents and experiences gained till now in the organizations of these events. I am not chairing a committee at the moment.



#### Gabriella Agrusti:

Chairs the Publication and Communication Committee which comprises Guri A. Nordvedt, Jo-Anne Baird, Julie Sewell, Christina Wikström and Lucy Simpson. The committee is responsible for the special editions of Cadmo, the newsletter and the development of the doctoral forum.



#### Henk Moelands:

As a member of the council I contribute to the Association's policy. Within the council I hold the position of Treasurer. This means that I am very much involved in all matters that have to do with the council's financial aspects, e.g. operating budget, balance sheet and financial claims.

Over the last few years I have also been responsible for developing the programmes for the association's annual conferences.



**Kathleen Tattersall** (see page 13) chairs the Marketing Committee which comprises Lise-Lotte Appelgren, Julie Grimshaw, Helen Harth and Sarah Maughan.

**Sarah Maughan** (see page 14) is the executive secretary of the association, having taken over the role from Christina Wikström.

The website has full details of all council members and the minutes of the council meetings are regularly posted there (<http://www.aea-europe.net/>).

Acknowledgement: photos of the Oslo conference courtesy of Roger Murphy

