Co-operation between UK universities: designing pre-entry English assessments

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our work in progress

• who we are

• collaboration I: 2 universities
  – defining the context: pre-arrival assessment

• collaboration II: various stakeholders
  – practicality

• next steps
we are: EAP practitioners
• teaching, assessment, administration, welfare
international students vital to UK universities
problem: pre-arrival assessment of English
• needs to be thorough (high stakes)
• needs to be practical
students = 3
• pre-masters
• pre-doctoral
• mature students
• 2+2 students
subjects: business, IT, development, arts, fashion, food, science, maritime studies, meteorology…
collaboration I: 2 universities

In common:

• drive to internationalise university
• varied student population
  – (Chinese-/Arabic-speakers in largest numbers)
• expected level extremes: A2-C1
• need tests **fit for purpose**
• ideal test(?):
  – practical / thematic / ‘academic’ / multi- & integrated skill
collaboration I: 2 universities

• **Specific to UoR:**
  – pre-entry only; paper format; 3-hour test

• **Specific to SSU:**
  – pre-entry AND direct entry; computerised test; 2 hours or less; most students pre-foundation teenagers
benefits of collaboration

• much in common – sharing of ideas
• sharing expertise in specific areas
• larger student base for data
  – better test design / more accurate measurement of certain test-taker profiles
• standard-setting opportunities
defining the context: socio-cognitive framework (Weir 2005)

Scoring validity (writing)

e.g.:
• rating scale
• rater training
• standardisation
• grading
collaboration II: within universities

Bachman & Palmer (1996)

– test qualities; emphasis on practicality

• large, complex institutions

• cooperation between stakeholders:
  – design phase
  – live testing
next steps

theory-based motivations

practical considerations
thanks, dank je, merci, danke, tak, tack, takk, 
kiitos, grazie, gracias, gràcies, obrigado, 
dziekuje, dêkuji, dakujem, köszönöm, hvala, 
multumesc, blagodarya, efcharisto (etc...) 

any advice gratefully received!

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