

Minutes from 2015 AGM

**12th EALTA Annual General Meeting
Held on Saturday 30 May 2015, 15:45 at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark**

Present: Conference participants who are members of EALTA – European Association for Language Testing and Assessment.

AGENDA

1. Approval of minutes from the 2014 AGM
2. Reports on EALTA activities since the last AGM including:
 - Events
 - Membership
 - Finances
 - Appointment of the auditor for 2015
3. Elections of EALTA Secretary, Treasurer and Upcoming President
4. Discussion of policy matters
5. 2016 Conference venue and date
6. 2016 Summer School
7. Date of the next AGM
8. AOB

The meeting was called to order by Gudrun Erickson (GE), President of EALTA, who welcomed all participants. The members of the Executive Committee then introduced themselves. GE asked if there was any other business that people wanted to discuss. There were no suggestions for AOBs.

1. Approval of minutes from the 2014 AGM

Since no changes were requested, the minutes from the Annual General Meeting 2014 were approved.

2. President's and Executive Committee's report on EALTA activities and progress in 2014 including events, membership, finances, and appointment of the auditor for 2015.

GE commented on the 2015 conference and thanked Slobodanka Dimova and her team for excellent preparation and hosting of the event, which had gathered 211 participants. She also expressed EALTA's gratitude to the sponsors for their support. Moreover, GE acknowledged the generous contributions of the pre-conference workshop leaders, the invited keynote speakers, and the SIG leaders.

Events

GE reported on the following events during the past year: the 3rd EALTA Summer school in Siena, with 39 participants from 16 countries; the 5th CBLA SIG Symposium at the University of Cyprus, and a SIG Seminar on Assessment of Writing and EAP Assessment at the University of Warwick. GE draw the participants' attention to the Resource page on the EALTA website and invited Sauli Takala to say a few words about J. B. Carroll's "Notes on the Measurement of Achievement in Foreign Languages", published in 1954, which he has re-typed and will offer to EALTA for publication on the Resources page. Sauli Takala also referred to his website http://kiesplang.fi/S_Takala/Home.html, where materials are freely available for downloading and consultation.

Membership

GE reported that the EALTA membership numbers at the time of the conference had increased considerably, Individual members by 17 % and Associate members by 12 %. Also Expert members had increased by 5 % and Institutional members by 9%.

At the time of the 2015 AGM, the EALTA membership numbers were the following:

Individual members: 1367 / 42 countries

Associate members: 171 / 36 countries

Institutional members: 61 / 20 countries

Expert members: 24 / 10 countries

- the top 10 countries in terms of individual membership numbers being UK, Turkey, Sweden, Germany, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Austria, Finland.

The Chair of the Membership Committee Norman Verhelst (NV) introduced the members of the Committee – Jayanti Banerjee, Monica Barni and Dina Tzagari – and reported that the activity during the year had not been much with only 3 application for Institutional membership, all of which successful, and 2 for expert membership. NV also reminded Institutional members that they can, and ought to, register as Individual members, if they want to have voting rights.

Angela Hasselgreen, who had agreed to remain on the Committee for a year after the end of her tenure as Chair of the Membership Committee, was thanked by GE for all the work and contribution to EALTA over the years.

Finances

The Treasurer Tony Green (TG) presented the audited accounts for 2014.

The accounts showed a very good, positive balance (audited balance sheet included in the AGM papers), which will allow EALTA to expand its activities. TG anticipated that a discussion on the Executive Committee's proposal on the use of part of the funds would be covered in item 4 on the Agenda. - The accounts were approved by the AGM.

Appointment of the auditor for 2015

The meeting approved the appointment of Karin Vogt as the auditor for 2015. GE thanked Karin for accepting the task.

3. Elections of EALTA Secretary, Treasurer and Upcoming President

Karin Vogt, Chair of the Nomination group, went through the procedures for the elections of the three positions. She then asked the nominees, Marita Härmälä for the post of Secretary, Jamie Dunlea for the post of Treasurer, and Claudia Harsch for the function of Upcoming President, to give a brief introduction of themselves. After that, the members who had the right to vote and had been allocated a ballot paper upon entering the room, cast their votes. After the collection of the ballot papers, Karin Vogt, Norman Verhelst, Ildiko Csepes and two witnesses left the room to proceed with the counting of the votes.

The three nominees were elected with almost a 100% consensus. Out of 53 votes cast, Marita Härmälä received 53 votes, Jamie Dunlea 52 votes and a blank, Claudia Harsch 51 and 2 blanks. The president welcomed the three of them as members of the Executive Committee.

The new Executive Committee members were given a warm welcome by the AGM. GE also thanked the members stepping down for all their good work for EALTA – Claudia Beccheroni as Secretary, Tony Green as Treasurer, and Claudia Harsch in her capacity as past conference organiser.

4. Discussion of policy matters

4.1 Expanding Activities

The Executive Committee presented a proposal for running webinars besides the existing annual conference. Other proposals from the AGM members included:

- Neus Figueras Casanova (NF): Interviews of expert practitioners who have been in the field for a long time, for example Sauli Takala. NF also mentioned one-day online conferences/seminars;
- Barry O' Sullivan suggested that the British Council could support EALTA in their efforts to enhance teacher assessment literacy;
- Sauli Takala proposed more 'scholar type', peer reviewed electronic publications and articles; a seminar or workshop for students and other members on how to organise research projects and write dissertations and articles;
- Dina Tzagari suggested the opportunity of streaming at least for the invited speakers at the annual conference;
- Dianne Wall suggested running webinars on public rigorous debates around important issues where two expert members take two different views; the outcomes of the debate could result in electronic publications;
- Sonja Zimmerman suggested a biannual newsletter to the members containing useful news. Neus Figueras added that in the newsletter there could be information about funding opportunities.
- Other suggestions included giving journal access for free, but for copyright reasons this suggestion was not considered feasible.

The Executive Committee welcomed the suggestions, which will be considered and reported back to the membership. However, they also reminded everyone that for some of the suggested activities one needs to bear in mind feasibility, given EALTA is a low administration, low bureaucracy organization based on the voluntary, free work of its members. Suggestions such as a newsletter or electronic publications would require human resource dedicated to finding the news or reviewing and vetting the materials before they are published.

4.2 Database and Website

Claudia Beccheroni (CB) thanked Lancaster University for continuing to host the database and the website for free and announced that a member of the IT team in Lancaster, Stephanie Strong, had accepted to dedicate, in her freelance capacity, more time to EALTA, given the database needs maintenance and updating work done to it. The treasurer TG underlined that this will incur a cost for EALTA.

CB also apologised to the memberships for some technical problems encountered during the year, which meant that some of the members did not receive email communications promptly.

She then continued talking about the website and reminding everyone that there is a form in the contact page for those who want to get in touch with the Executive Committee without using the discussion list.

4.3 Voting procedures

CB reminded everyone that as per the 2014 AGM minutes, the voting in presentia versus other means of voting at a distance were discussed and as a result the Executive Committee had proposed to form a group to look into the issue more closely. Since nobody volunteered to be part of the group, the Executive Committee decided to investigate the issue themselves.

From the advice received it seems that, given EALTA is an association where anyone can ask to be an individual and associate member without paying a fee, security is of paramount importance to avoid that through massive registration of members a certain group of people can take over the organisation and maybe change its original mission and use the funds inappropriately.

Giving that guaranteeing security for voting in absentia either electronically or on paper would require serious investment and none of the proposals made by the members was really secure enough, the Executive Committee proposed to the AGM that for the time being we leave the voting as it was conceived from the founders of the association, that is in presentia. However, we will

continue to debate the issue in the future, if secure, low cost and low administration solutions are found.

4.4 Finances

Tony Green (TG) and Gudrun Erickson (GE) presented the proposals that the Executive Committee had discussed during the past year about how to use EALTA funds. It was made clear that we need to keep at least half of the current sum, i.e. 50.000 €, on the account in case we have an emergency over the organisation of the annual conference. Also, some money will be needed for the maintenance and update of the database. The rest, however, could be invested for three types of categories of activities:

Category 1: more events and activities organised by EALTA, such as expanding and financing SIG seminars; running a summer school every year rather than every other year; running more workshops, webinars and the type of extra activities discussed earlier on in the Activities section of the meeting (point 4.1).

Category 2: devoting a modest sum to co-finance group activities and events proposed by the EALTA members in line with EALTA mission statement, for which the members would need to make a proposal in line with stipulated criteria. A form will be prepared for this purpose by the Executive Committee.

Category 3: financing individuals to attend the annual conference.

A discussion about the third category followed, especially centred on giving discounts to students for the conference and finding cheaper accommodation wherever possible.

TG noted that the conference fee is already very low and Slobodanka Dimova underlined that if we needed to discount the fee for students, we would automatically need to make the fee for the rest of the participants higher and that it would be difficult to make any calculations of ratio of students vs non students participants at the time of setting the fee.

It was agreed that making the conference fee higher for non-students would be unfair for all those participants who come from parts of the world where salaries are lower than in Western Europe. Other members suggested that EALTA should give awards like ILTA, but the general feeling was that EALTA should not promote competition, so scholarships or awards were considered not to be quite in line with the association ethos. The Executive Committee agreed to look into possibilities of discounting the conference fee for students through for example adding this as a sponsorship option.

Barry O' Sullivan offered EALTA a similar support from the British Council to the one already given to the Language Testing Forum, which would be the payment of a number of conference fees for students agreed by the Council.

To sum up there was broad agreement on category 1 and 2; on Category 3 discussions will continue during the year to come.

5. 2016 Conference venue and dates

The 2016 EALTA Conference will take place at the Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain from 5th to 8th of May, with pre-conference workshops and SIG meetings running before the conference as usual. The conference will be organised by Christina Perez Guillot and colleagues. Further information about the conference will be given in due course via the EALTA website and electronic membership list.

6. 2016 Summer school

The 2016 Summer school will be held at the University of Innsbruck from 18th to 22nd July. The theme will be assessment of productive skills.

More information about the Summer school will be given in due course via the EALTA website and the electronic membership list.

7. Date of the next Annual General Meeting

The next AGM will be held during the 2016 EALTA conference at the Universitat Politècnica de València on Saturday 7 May.

8. AOB

There was an AOB point raised by John de Jong via TG, namely the proposal to make the expert membership fee a lifetime contribution of 300 euros.

The discussion developed around two points:

1. Lifetime expert status
2. Streamlining the payment of the expert membership fee.

After some discussion it was decided that no status should be for lifetime, so the first point was objected to primarily on two grounds:

- a. That some experts might not be in the profession for life;
- b. That expert members might do something during their professional career which is openly against EALTA 's ethos and mission, which speaks against a lifetime title.

There was a long discussion about point number 2. CB and TG explained that the process of collecting a 30 euro fee is cumbersome and that paying a fee for more than 1 year is complicated by the fact that if expert members serve on committees, or run SIGs or workshops, they are entitled to have their fee waived for that year.

The expert members present preferred paying for more years than one and did not seem to be worried about paying for a year, even when/if they do some work for EALTA.

Expert member Dianne Wall asked for the minutes to mention how difficult the process of collecting fees from members is.

The AGM approved Neus Figueras Casanova's proposal of having the newly elected Treasurer, Jamie Dunlea, look into streamlining the process and come with a proposal at the next AGM.

Executive Committee

Between the 2015 and 2016 AGMs, the EALTA Executive Committee will have the following members:

Gudrun Erickson – *President*

Marita Härmälä – *Secretary*

Jamie Dunlea – *Treasurer*

Norman Verhelst – *Chair of the Membership Committee*

Claudia Harsch – *Upcoming President*

Slobodanka Dimova – *2015 Conference organiser*

Cristina Perez Guillot – *2016 Conference organiser*