

# Taking advantage of washback from authentic lecture response listening tests

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# Pre-sessional Programme

- 6 week – Formative Module
- 4 week – Summative Module
  
- Summative Assessment:
  - Portfolio Writing (40%)
  - Seminar (40%)
  - Lecture Response (20%)

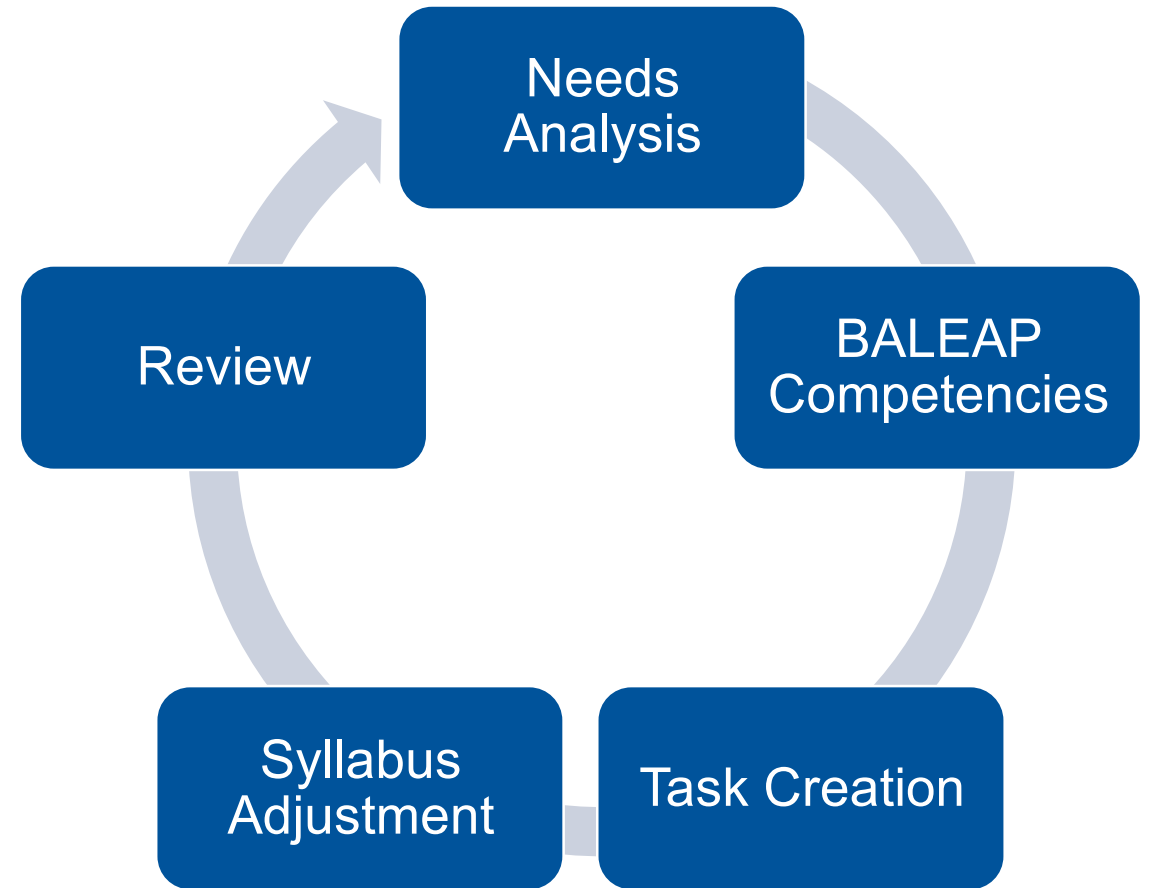
# BALEAP Accreditation Visit

*2.6 There are formative and/or summative assessments for and of learning, which clearly reflect the academic expectations of contexts and are based on collaborative dialogue with academic subject specialists.*

Exemplary Practice	Good Practice	<b>Acceptable Standard</b>	Attention Needed	Needs Urgent Attention
5	4	<b>3</b>	2	1

# Design Principle

- “[. . .] there are large environmental and experiential differences between a learner attending to an audio recording in a classroom and a real-world lecture listener who has the benefit of visual support, both paralinguistic [. . .] and linguistic [. . .] (Field, 2011).



# The Lecture Response Assessment

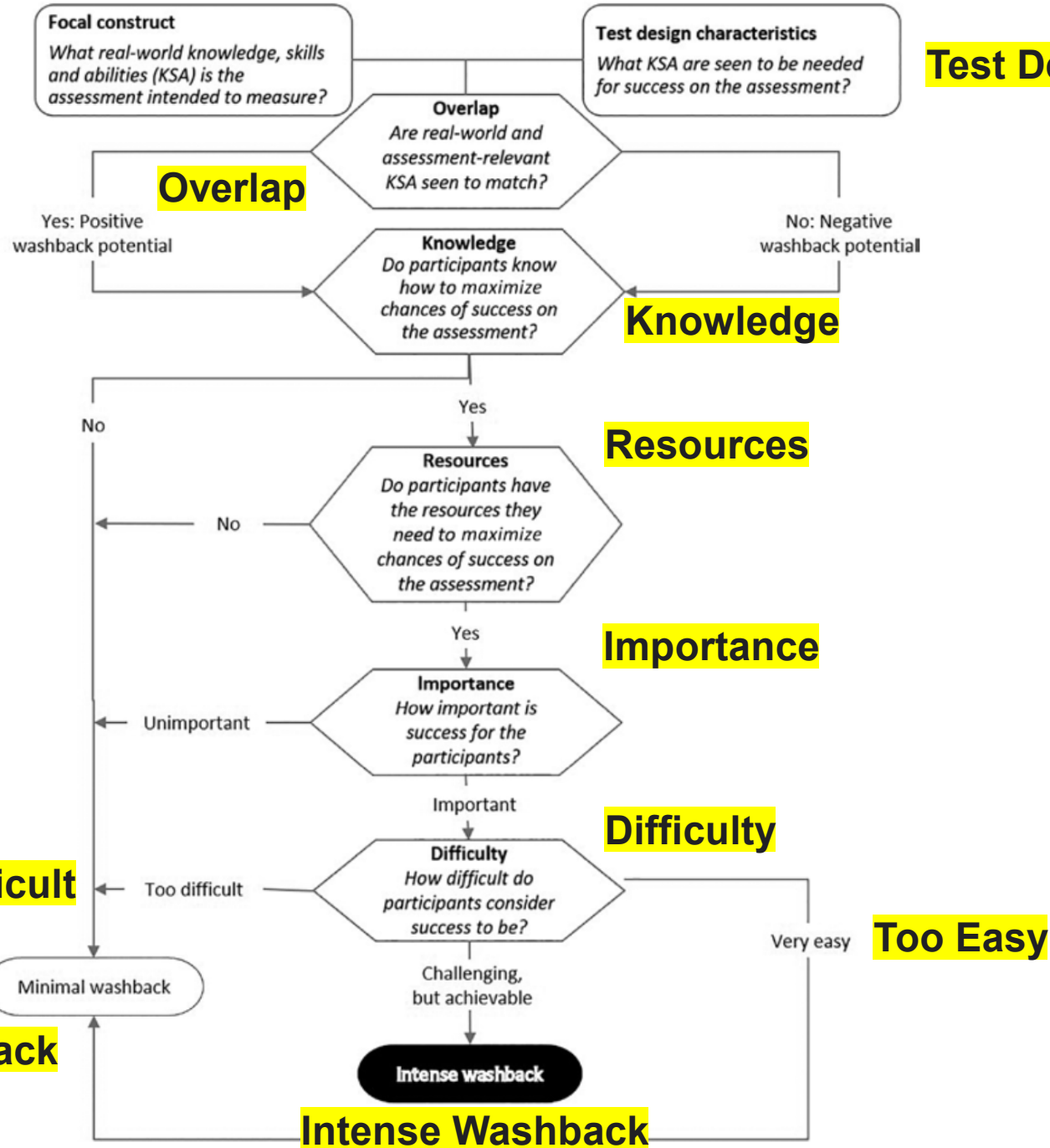
- Live Lecture in Penultimate Week (9 / 3)
  - First half = 20 Minutes > 10 Minute break
    - Students can speak to each other / lecturer
    - Students can take notes on paper or computer
      - Invigilators watch screens
  - Second half = 20 Minutes > 10 Minute break
  - Students are given 90 minutes to answer 10 – 15 short answer questions based on the live lecture
  - I and other academic staff attend the lecture and are on hand to edit questions “on the fly”

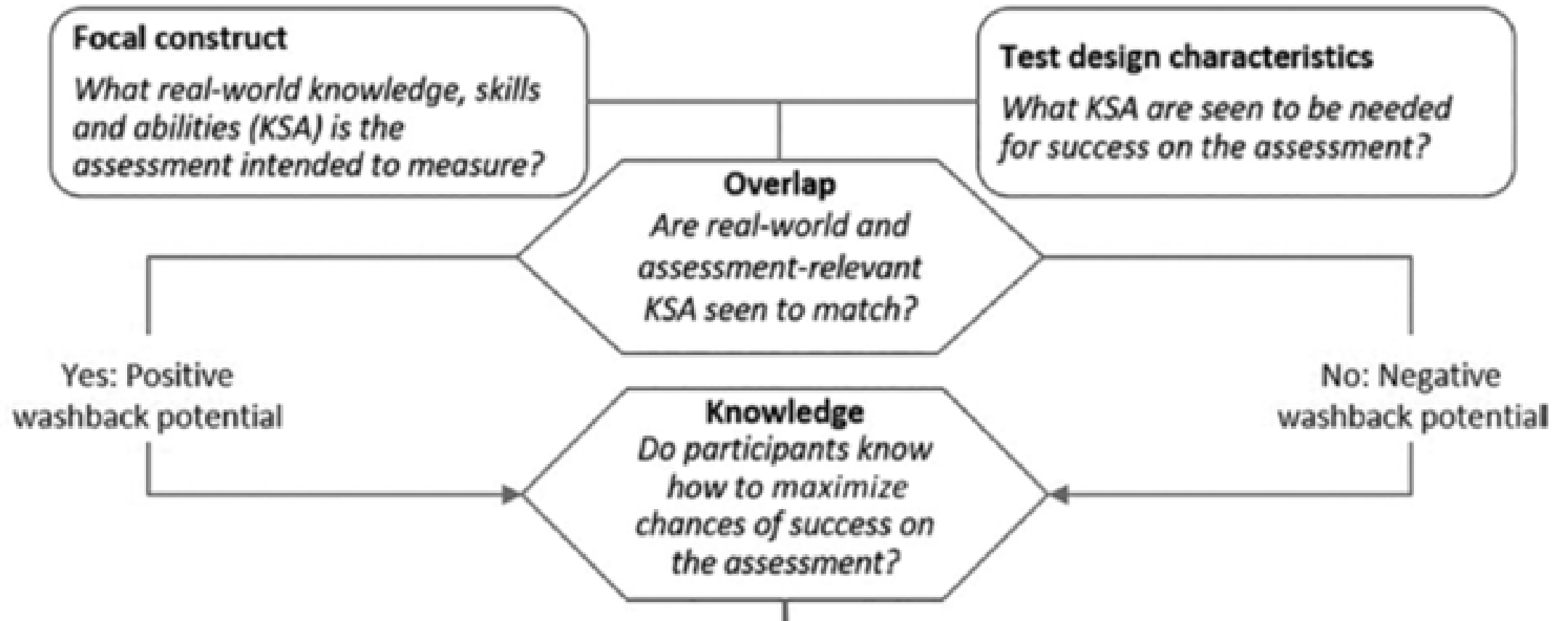
# How to Prepare Students?

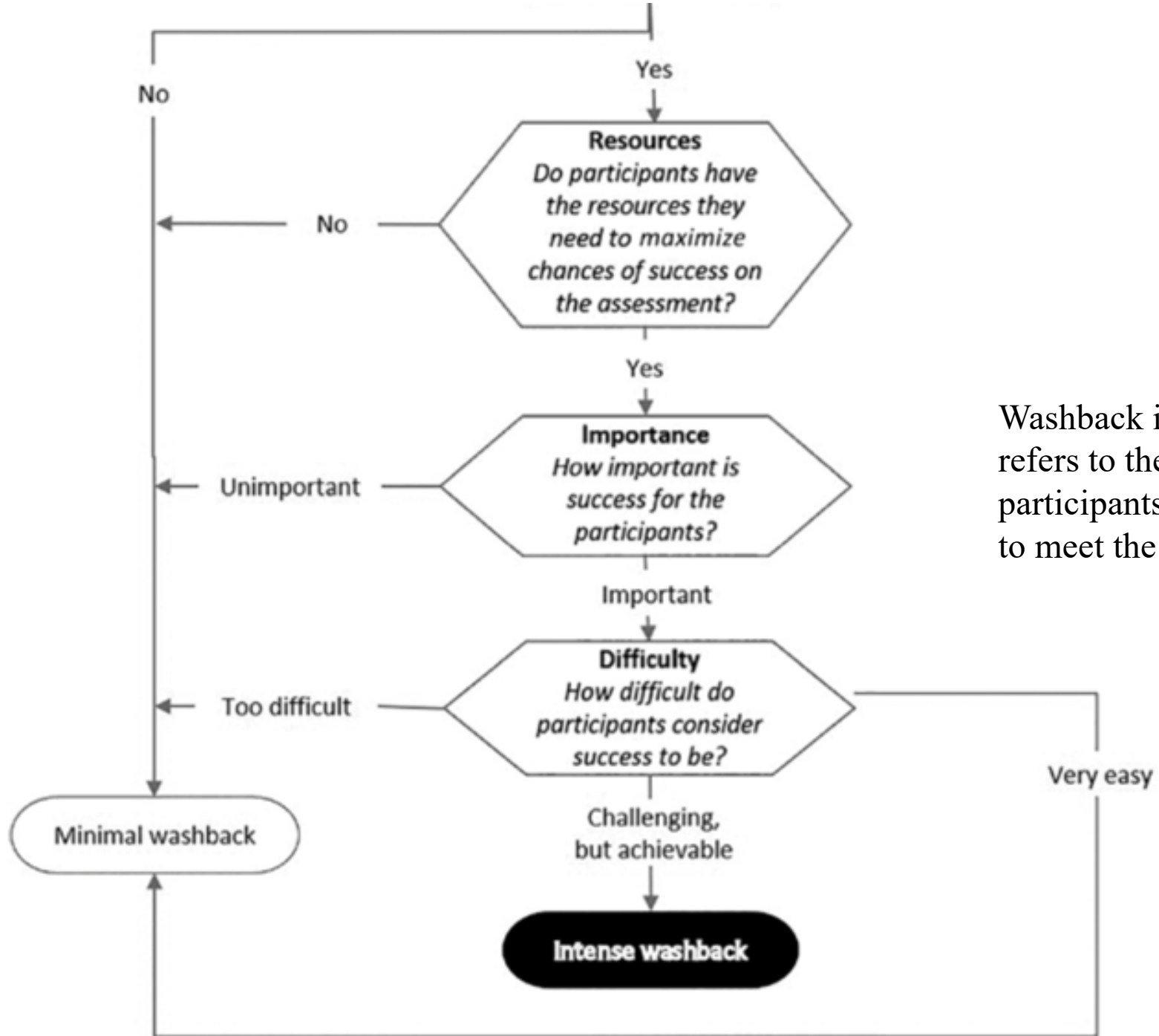
- It is often claimed that high-stakes tests, in particular, have a detrimental effect on learning as teachers focus their efforts on the content of the test at the expense of skills that are not tested. (Green, 2021, p87)
- Create an overlap between Lessons / Assessment / Future Skills
- Washback Model

# Focal Construct

# Test Design Characteristics







Washback intensity (Cheng, 2005) refers to the degree to which participants will adjust their behaviour to meet the demands of a test.

# Focal Construct

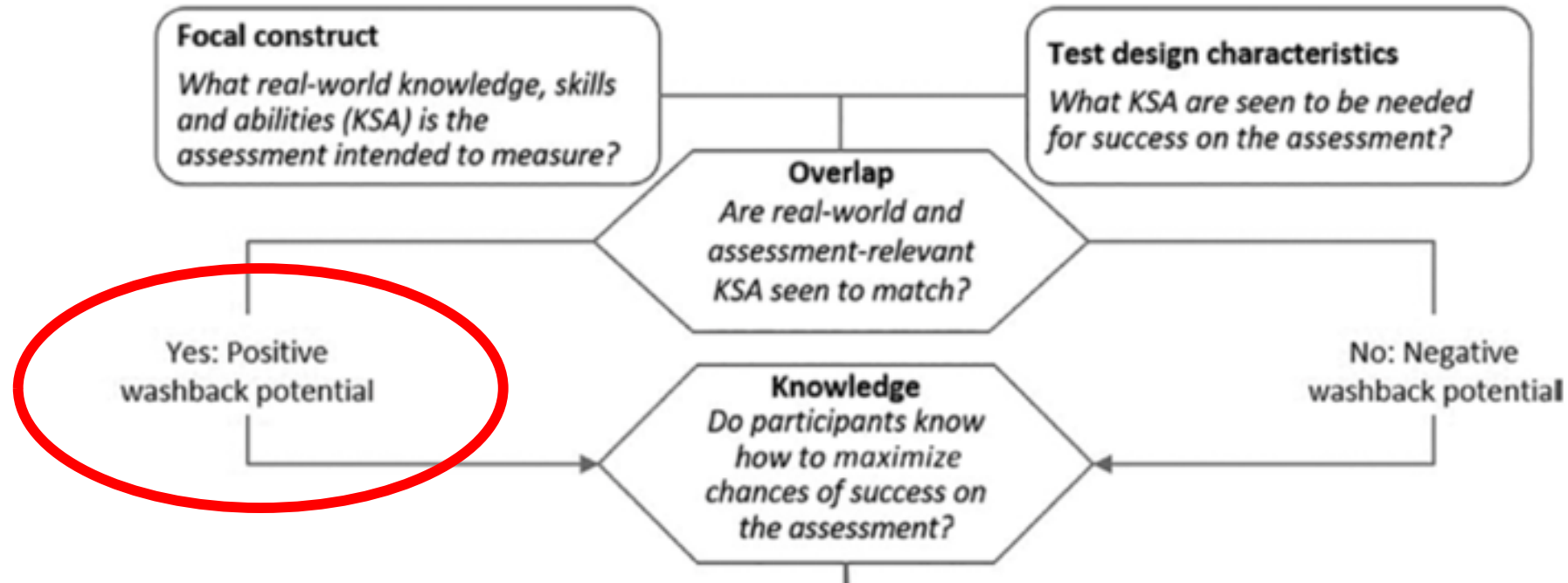
- What real world knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) is the assessment intended to measure?
- *Ability to understand the language in a live academic lecture, including explicit and inferred meaning.*
- *Ability to take notes during a lecture and use those notes to demonstrate understanding.*
- ***Ability to understand paralinguistic features of lectures (body language, visual aids, etc.)***
- ***Ability to seek clarification from the lecturer / classmates about things they didn't understand***

# Test design characteristics

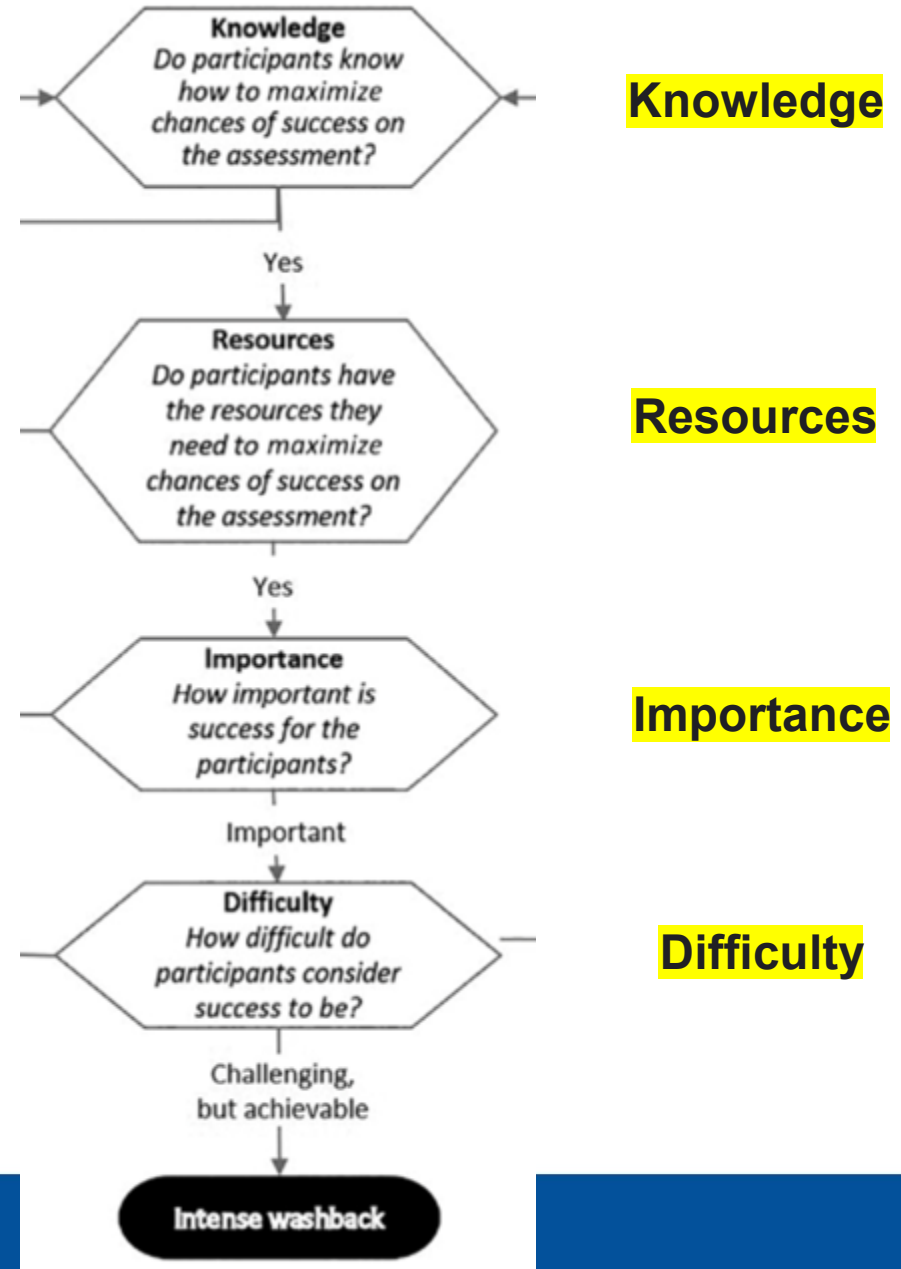
- What KSA are seen to be needed for success on the assessment?
  - *Hopefully, the same or similar to the focal construct:*
- *Understand the language in a live academic lecture – **lecture should be live and spontaneous***
- *Take and use notes – **Ss can use laptops, tablets, pen/paper***
- *Understand paralinguistic features – **lecturer visible, use PPT or other visual aids***
- *Seek clarification – **ability to talk to lecturer, classmates***

# Overlap

- Are real world and assessment relevant KSA seen to match?



# Taking Advantage of the Potential



# 1. Knowledge

- Do participants know how to maximize chances of success on the assessment? **YES (we hope)**
- How do we prepare them for the assessment?
  - Academic lectures every week (same room/conditions)
  - Special guest lectures
  - Listening strand built into materials
  - Listening of the week for self-study
  - Formative mock exam
  - Low-stakes assessment (5% / 5% / 10%)

Week & Theme	Session Details	Research Skills	Academic Writing	Listening & Speaking Skills
IE1380 - W1  Academic Study and Educational Culture	Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading &amp; Note-taking Strategies</li> <li>• Critical thinking</li> <li>• Source credibility</li> <li>• Library search</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well-structured essay writing</li> <li>• Paragraph structure</li> <li>• Writing an outline</li> <li>• Self-Reflection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening Skills (Listening strand: Lecture 1, 2 &amp; 3)</li> <li>• Focus on local processing</li> </ul>
	Aims	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect on your personal approach to reading in an academic context</li> <li>2. Develop greater awareness of a range of reading strategies to support academic study</li> <li>3. Set up integrated task 1</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect on your academic writing skills</li> <li>2. Develop greater understanding of the key features of academic writing &amp; the process of writing an essay</li> <li>3. Practise organising ideas into paragraphs</li> <li>4. Develop self-reflection techniques</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop ability to follow authentic speech</li> <li>2. Develop familiarity with accents</li> <li>3. Develop note-taking skills</li> </ol>
	<b>BALEAP Competencies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• R2.1.1 Scan texts and identify key points/sections</li> <li>• R2.1.2 Go beyond superficial understanding of texts and demonstrate deep comprehension</li> <li>• R2.1.3 Synthesise information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• W2.1.1 Plan written tasks effectively, especially essays</li> <li>• W2.1.2 Build and depart from model/sample structure (e.g. essay templates)</li> <li>• W2.1.3 Organise written texts *</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L2.1.1 Understand rapid, colloquial 'lecture' speech *</li> <li>• L2.1.2 Cope with different lecturing styles</li> <li>• L2.1.3 Understand unfamiliar/non-native accents</li> <li>• L2.1.9 Cope with con-current <u>note-taking</u> and listening</li> <li>• L2.1.12 Take notes sufficiently quickly to record appropriate detail</li> <li>• L2.1.13 Take notes without being impeded by poor spelling</li> </ul>



## 2. Resources

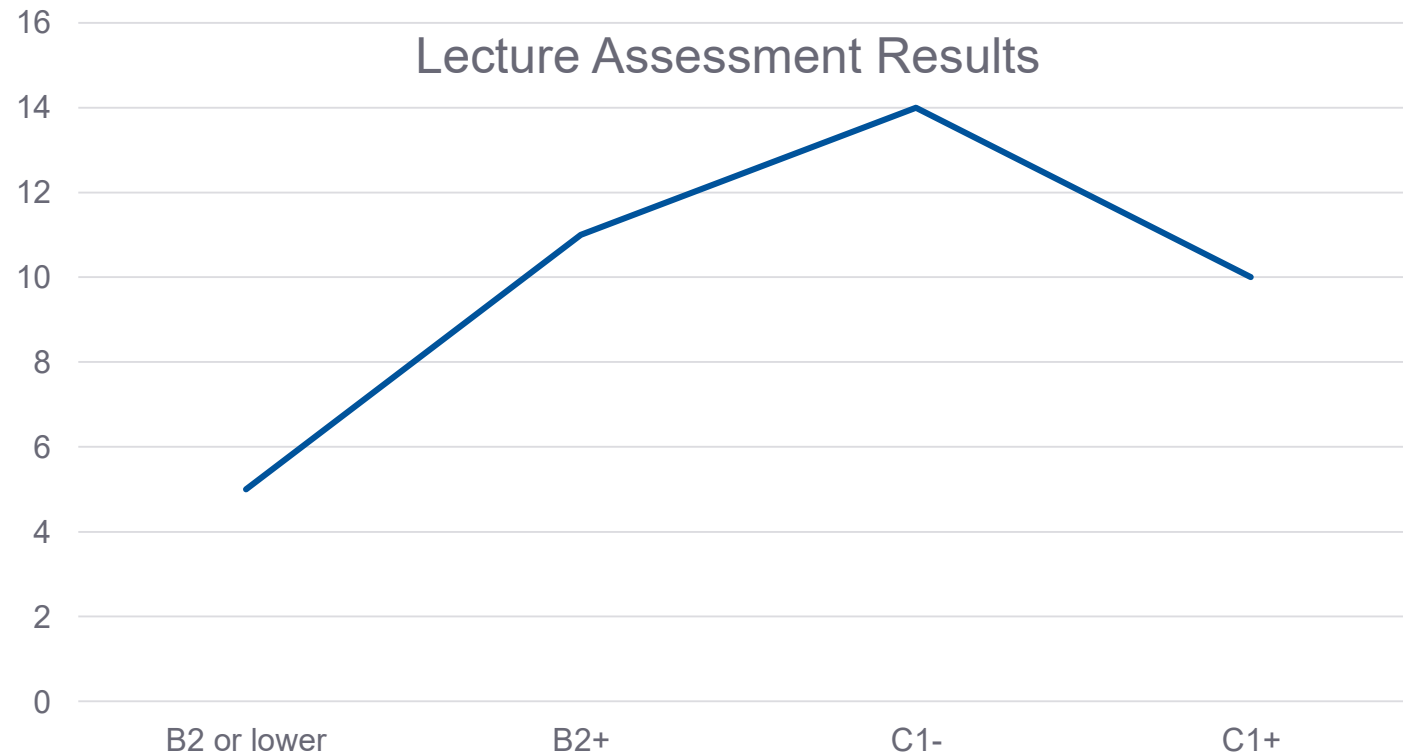
- Do participants have the resources they need to maximize chances of success on the assessment? **YES (We hope)**
  - Practice listenings (inside and outside of class, both recorded and live)
  - Sources checked for China access for online students
  - Computers for note-taking (can borrow from IT if necessary)
  - Access to the lecturer and friends (invigilated)
  - No internet/transcription/AI
    - May be more authentic – still discussing this

# 3. Importance

- How important is success for the participants? **IMPORTANT**  
(We hope)
  - Pre-sessional very high stakes
  - However, lecture response tasks only 20% of final grade
  - Ability to take “Extra Assessment”
  - SSCC 2024 - Lectures were recognised as a useful and important part of future studies – students wanted more

# Difficulty

- How difficult do participants consider success to be?

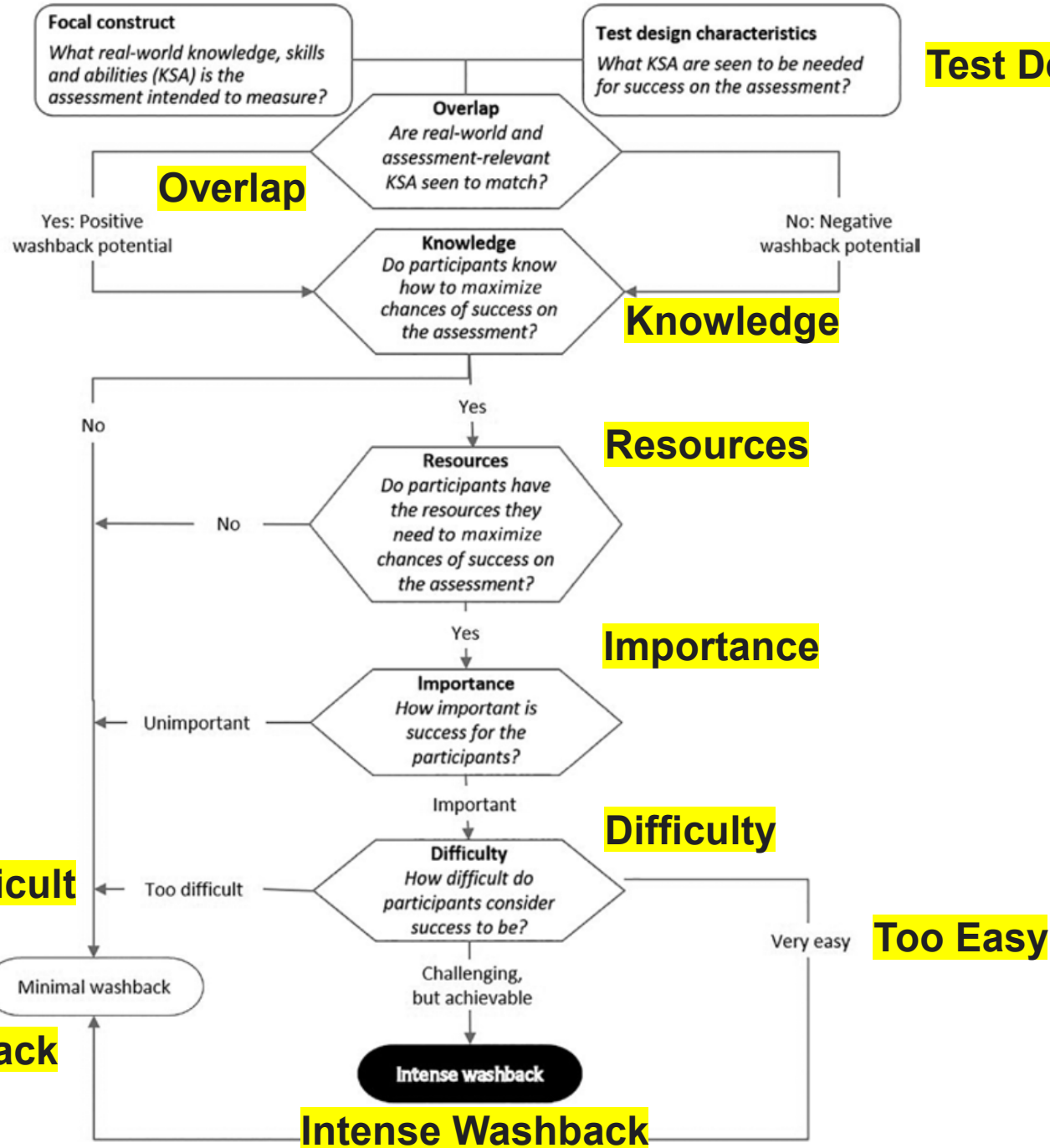


# Difficulty

- 13% (5/39) of students had to take the Extra Assessment either because they failed to get the score they needed on the Lecture Response / Listening or Overall
- Only 1 student (of 39) failed to progress after Extra Assessment

# Focal Construct

# Test Design Characteristics



# Minimal Washback

# Intense Washback

# How did we do?

## Questionnaire:

- How much of the lecture did you successfully understand?
- How much of the content of the questions were you able to understand?
- How much did your notes help you answer the questions?
- I agree that the activities in class and on the course helped to prepare me for this assessment.
- I am happy with my performance on this assessment.

# How did we do?

## Overlap:

- 78% said the activities in the course helped prepare them for the assessment
- The lecture and seminar tests helped me adapt to the course content in advance. Thank you so much for learning and mentoring the past 4 weeks.
- I felt difficult to connect the lesson's contents with those questions.

# How did we do?

## Knowledge:

- I think it's my problem that I haven't performed well, I need more practices on listening and vocabulary. lecturer spoke nice and friendly, teachers were all very nice.

## Resources:

- Some of the students have knowledge about computer history, but some do not. So it would be more fair to all of the students, personally suggesting, if the lecture was based on some general topics, like diet history, transportation history, society problems, coronavirus events etc.

# How did we do?

## Importance:

- i really want to pass this pre-sessional course, I'm looking forward to my main course and future life in st andrews.
- Let me pass 11 plz

# How did we do?

## Difficulty:

- 65% said they were happy with their performance on the assessment in 2025
- The lecture is clear but the questions is hard to understand. It takes a lot of time to understand the problem and understand what kind of answer it wants.
- It's difficult for me because my listening ability is bad and hasn't improved. This lecture is beyond my listening ability. I feel so sad.
- The questions are too detailed to be answered.
- The average % of the questions that students claimed to understand was 72%

# Going Forward

Overall: We think we're on the right track BUT

Need to Consider:

- Content vs Environmental Authenticity
- 22% didn't find the course materials helped them – how can we raise that number?
- How much authenticity is appropriate?

# References

Cheng, L. (2005). Changing language teaching through language testing: A washback study. *Studies in language testing*, 21. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Field, J. (2011). Into the mind of the academic listener. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(2), 102-112. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.04.002>

Green, A. (2021). *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing Language in Action*, Second edition, Routledge.

Thank You!

Questions?