**Testing Officer’s Report for the Bristol Conference AGM**

**Meetings:**

Since December 2015, testing working party meetings have been limited to members of the working party, who are also executive committee members, meeting during executive meetings, or meeting up during ad hoc conference or PIM events. There has also been quite a lot of email correspondence during the past 16 months between members of the testing party. However, with the development of the roadshow initiative the need to meet either remotely or face-to-face or a more regular basis is clearly necessary (see below).

**Membership of the Working Party:**

Currently the members have been reduced by about 50% due to people moving overseas or taking on extra responsibilities in their various institutions. As a results I put out a call for interested colleagues with appropriate experience to join the working party via JISCMAIL. The criteria for membership are listed below:-

         Specific involvement in/responsibility for language testing in your institution

         Experience in item writing e.g. for one of the SELTS (IELTS, PTS, Trinity etc) or a similar organisation

         Some basic knowledge in descriptive statistical analysis procedures

         Experience in creating language test specifications

         Research relating to language testing

         Qualifications relating to, or including, a language testing element

         Being able to devote some time during the year to attending either face-to-face or online meetings to develop the role of BALEAP in maintaining and extending the growing interest in assessment literacy

The response has been very positive and I have promised interested colleagues to inform them of the outcome of their expressions of interest after the Bristol Conference.

**Language testing roadshows:**

To date there have been more than 71 responses to the questionnaire that I sent out to the BALEAP members and posted on the website. Of these, 25 institutions have now indicated that they would be prepared to host an assessment event. Geographically, there is quite a good spread of interest including in Scotland: Glasgow, St Andrews, Dundee, Aberdeen & Heriot-Watt; in northern England and the Midlands: Durham, Nottingham Trent, Keele, ELTC Sheffield, Manchester Metropolitan, Teesside, Sunderland, Birmingham City, York St John & Leicester; in the South: Bath, Kent, Bristol, Royal Holloway, University of the Arts London, Trinity College London and Reading as well as three centres outside the UK: Luxembourg, Dublin Business School and Waikato University in New Zealand.

Listed overleaf are the most significant findings:

Clearly item writing in general or for specific language skills, and designing test specifications appear to be the most popular. Creating integrated tests and learning about statistics are also of reasonable interest.

**Areas of language testing and assessment of would you be most interested in or benefit from?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Interest\* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Designing test specifications | 62.50% | 8.93% | 10.71% | 12.50% | 5.36% |
| Training test specialists | 47.06% | 19.61% | 13.73% | 11.76% | 7.84% |
| Item writing for all skills | 63.46% | 19.23% | 5.77% | 1.93% | 9.62% |
| Item writing for specific skills | 66.67% | 11.765 | 9.80% | 3.92% | 7.84% |
| Creating integrated tests | 53.70% | 20.73% | 5.56% | 7.41% | 12.96% |
| Statistics | 52.73% | 12.73% | 12.73% | 12.73% | 9.09% |
| Test manual | 32.69% | 17.31% | 23.08% | 19.23% | 7.69% |
| Continuous Assessment | 47.83% | 8.70% | 21.74% | 8.70% | 13.04% |

\* [1=very interested; 5=little interest or not relevant

**Preferred Schedule**

Series of one-day events over a year = 55.71%

Two day programme of workshops = 30%

Half-day events connected with a PIM or conference = 14.29%

This is very promising but the big issues, as I see it, is funding. I have contacted the working party members saying we would need to put forward a plan as to how such events would be funded and who would be responsible for running them i.e. the organisation of the event, advertising, liaising with the host institutions, deciding what to cover during events, producing the materials and leading the activities. I’m sure there are other factors to consider as well. The responses to the questionnaire are indicating some fairly strong preferences which is useful. On the whole, as described above, respondents expressed a strong preference for one-day events.

In January 2017 I and a colleague from the University of Reading, Louise Bourguignon, ran the initial testing roadshow at the University of Bristol. This was jointly attended by 25 EAP academics from the Universities of Bristol and Bath. The event was generally well-received and the experience has enabled us to refine the content and a further Bristol Conference pre-conference workshop is to be held on 7th April. There are also plans afoot to carry out roadshows at the Universities of Kent and Durham so far in 2017.

**John Slaght (BALEAP Testing Officer)**

**28th March 2017**