

## BALEAP TAFSIG WEBINAR SUMMARY

### Introduction

The inaugural BALEAP TAFSIG webinar addressing online assessment was attended by approximately 200 participants, mostly in the UK but from as far afield as Australia. The topic of online assessment was a response to the recent huge shift to online delivery necessitated by the coronavirus. The BALEAP general discussion list showed multiple issues within online assessment, which members are expected to deal with immediately.

The webinar was framed around speakers giving short presentations of the approach to online assessment in their institutions with an opportunity for participants to respond and ask questions. Rob Playfair (University of Liverpool) gave a description of an integrated assessment system based on a valid construct of language proficiency and the changed realities of delivering secure tests with finite resources. Fiona Orel and Joan McCormack (University of Reading) shared their experience of adapting their pre-sessional courses. The University of Reading has also moved provision to 100% online and assessment is still evolving to match requirements of the different stakeholders. Sam Barclay (Nottingham Trent University) pointed out that validity issues need to be highlighted and confirmed before tests can be rolled out. He also warned of the time and resources needed to create parallel tests. Glynis Brydon (University of Northumbria) described her experience of a UKVI audit and the issues this raises concerning test security. Glynis was also concerned about the pressure from schools for online products in a short time frame.

The issues raised, while overlapping, are categorized below:

### Integrated assessment

This seemed to be favoured over discrete testing. An alternative to integrated tests, Trinity was specifically mentioned as a model - though without adaptation this is labour intensive requiring one to one interviews between the examiner and student. One suggested adaptation to reduce this burden was group listening then individual written submissions of the main ideas within a time limit. Also, frequently mentioned was portfolio assessment.

NTU China is using [Flipgrid](#) for portfolio assessment. Students submit a weekly video task (10 tasks over the semester), 5 lecture summaries with personal responses to the lecture, and 5 mini presentations.

## Technology

A number of technologies applicable to online testing (and teaching) were mentioned, for example, Microsoft Teams and Zoom, which could be incorporated into VLEs. It seems that the technology is available for online activity, with the caveat that Internet provision may not be uniform. Another consideration was synchronous Vs. asynchronous assessment - how far does changing e.g. a timed sit down exam (synchronous) to a coursework style assessment (asynchronous) change the construct of the test and the meaning of the scores gained from it?

## Security

This is the major concern, especially if tests are taken at home. Proctoring services are not fail-proof and prohibitively expensive for UK HEI. A solution suggested to plagiarism and essay mills was process writing and essay vivas. This raised the question of to what extent we want to emulate face to face assessment methods (e.g. invigilated timed exams), or consider alternative methods which may be better suited to remote administration (e.g. coursework).

## SELT requirements

It seemed that there was some confusion over which tests have SELT status. Currently only IELTS and Trinity are accepted SELTs. It is thought that PTE may be added in April, but this is yet to be announced.

A SELT is required for a pre-sessional course that is in the UK (not overseas or online).

A SELT is not required for online/in-country pre-sessional courses, or for direct entry. UKVI specifies that HEIs that are licensed sponsors can choose how to assess students for entry to UG and PG programmes to a minimum level of B2.

The BALEAP Testing Working Party is currently updating the [Guidelines for English Language Tests for University Entry](#) document.

UKALTA has a HE Assessment Literacy Working Group that is working on guidelines for testing.

## Resources

Creating robust tests from scratch will demand considerable time and expertise. However, the pressure to adopt standardised tests needs to be balanced by concerns over their validity.

Multiple participants expressed their appreciation for the webinar and there was a request for follow-up sessions looking at specific areas of assessment, for example, listening. A padlet <https://padlet.com/wrimmer15/q4tir59vdz8r> captures the

questions below and invites BALEAP members and the ELT community generally to continue the dialogue.

Questions raised: please go to the Padlet link above to follow and contribute to the discussion

- There are so many essay companies, how would you make sure that the student has done those essays?
- Could we use forms with embedded listening texts to administer listening tests?
- How are universities managing CAS for UG/PG if pre-sessional is going online? Our pre-sessional ends a week before term, and Admissions Office states:
  - They can't issue a CAS until the pre-sessional ends
  - They won't issue a CAS that close to the start of term
- Regarding in-house tests going online, the Home Office has made no comment regarding these so far so we need to be careful although some institutions are already testing online, therefore I am wondering how these are going ahead?
- Are we making distinctions between online tests in a test centre and online tests done in the student's own home?
- What are your considerations for places where internet access is not always reliable or is non-existent? Live lessons or assessments in these cases are nearly impossible
- Two questions about listening for classroom/medium stakes assessment where we can't afford one to one proctoring How do we prevent students from listening multiple times, and how do we feel from a fairness perspective about administering timed tasks if we know students are working from home with varying degrees of access to high speed internet?

## Works cited

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