

WORKSHOP 4

Quality assurance in test development; challenges in implementing and sustaining quality

by

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Number of participants: min 10 and max 30

Overview

Issues of quality are what can make or break a test and the impact can be far reaching as more and more 'accountabilities' are attached to tests. Yet the scale and scope of quality processes can seem daunting to many language certificate awarding institutions, especially small scale operations. The objectives of the workshop are to present and analyse the many facets of quality and to explore challenges in both implementing and sustaining quality. The main aim, however, is to provide a discussion forum to share and learn, and to help build well-grounded confidence in QA procedures.

Learning outcomes:

- To understand what quality means in different contexts and how to plan for sustainability.
- To understand the part that consultation and review plays in QA
- To understand and value the contributions of both stakeholders and experts
- To analyse understand the relationships between data and opinion
- To develop strategies for tackling challenges and risks to QA

Contents

Session 1: CONSULTATION

- What does QA look like and why does it matter?
- How can we plan for quality (even if a small scale test)?
- What do different parties want to see? (eg regulators / Ministries / Govt offices / Executive)
- Who do you need to 'recruit'? What is the profile of an Expert?
- Why is consultation important?
- How can belonging to professional networks help?

Session 2: PROCESS

- Where does your test sit? How do you know?
- What are the key steps in QA?
- 'What if ...?' scenarios. How to plan ahead?

- What can't you know/control?

Session 3: REVIEW

- What is the difference in QA in testing receptive vs productive skills?
- Examiner standardisation - what can go wrong? How to fix?
- What claims can you make?

Session 4: CHALLENGES

- What challenges do different contributing groups (eg senior examiners, external experts, etc) can bring to the process?
- What is the danger of making assumptions (eg using 'known' items; introducing a new test to experienced examiners, etc.)?
- How do we deal with special needs and complaints?

Methods

Using the approach captured in the "Mantle of the Expert" (Dorothy Heathcote, 1985) from drama training, participants will be given tasks to complete that require them to work out how to recognise and implement QA from a series of problems or situations they will be presented with. The approach also incorporates and activates consultation, critical feedback and review and so represents a 'loop input' of what a QA process might look like. Participants will also have an opportunity to present their own problems, issues or queries to the group for discussion and potential resolution. We will encourage sharing of best practice with exemplars from participants and workshop leaders.

Target audience

EALTA members and interested individuals who have been, are now or will be:

- involved in the development of an assessment system
- interested in improving QA/standards of raters and rating processes

Background knowledge

No background in Test Development is assumed although it is assumed participants have an interest in engaging with test development at whatever level.

Pre-workshop reading

Bring case studies or challenges to talk about to the group. Cases /challenges can be anonymised as we aim to extract the general from the particular. These do not have to be from a full-blown test development and may simply revolve around issues working with a very small team, limited resources etc.

Participants will be sent documentation they may find useful to prepare for the workshop.

Workshop facilitators:



Neus Figueras holds a PhD in language testing from the University of Barcelona. She is catedràtica d'escola oficial d'idiomes and has worked in the Departament d'Ensenyament de la Generalitat de Catalunya coordinating the certificate exams for the EOI. She lectures part-time at the University of Barcelona and the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. She has been involved in a number of international research and development projects (Speakeasy, Dialang, Ceftrain) and collaborates regularly with the Council of Europe in the dissemination of the Common European Framework of Reference in relation with testing and assessment. She has published articles in the field of language teaching and assessment and is one of the authors of the Manual for Relating examinations to the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2009). She has recently published, with Fuensanta Puig, *Pautas para la evaluación del español como lengua extranjera* (2013). Edinumen. She has been a teacher trainer for over 20 years, and has given courses and presented in universities in Spain and in different European countries, in Asia and the USA. She was the first President (2004-7) of EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment), and she is now an expert member (www.ealta.eu.org)



Elaine Boyd has worked in assessment design and development, examiner training and standardisation and quality standards for over 20 years for a range of international testing organisations, including Cambridge English and Trinity College London. She has worked on exams across a range of levels and domains and has published several exam course books and test practice books. She has also conducted courses and sessions in item writing and assessment literacy for teachers in Europe and India and has published articles in this field. She holds a PhD in spoken language and pragmatics from the University of Cardiff and is an Associate Tutor for the online MA in Applied Linguistics and TESOL at Leicester University. She is currently working on the Institute of Education, University College, London.