



School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies Course Outline

LALS 523: Language Assessment, Trimester 1, 2008

1. Course Coordinator:

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2. Staff: Dr Peter Gu

3. Class times and rooms: Wednesday 1-3 pm, KP24 101

The class meets on the following ten dates:

March 12, 19, 26, April 2, 9 [Break], April 30, May 7, 14, 21, 28.

For distance students, the course is available at <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>. When you enrol you will automatically be given a computer user account, which will be on your *Confirmation of Study* form. Usually, it is the first six letters of your family name and four letters of your first name. So if your name is Robert Cameron, your user name might be *camerorobe*. Your password will be your student ID number. You need to use this computer user account when you access journals from off-campus. For help, contact scs-hda@vuw.ac.nz or phone (04) 463 5050. If you want to use other student computing services, you need to call the SCS Help Desk on (04) 463 5050. Staff will re-confirm your username and re-set your password after confirming your identity. Useful websites include <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/scs/services/services.aspx> and <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/scs/>. If you are an international student the following site could be useful for you <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/international/>.

Before you log into Blackboard or make any use of your Victoria University programs, you will need to change your original password. Please visit here <https://password.student.vuw.ac.nz/psynch/nph-psf.exe?lang=en-us>. Please login with your username and your student ID (your student number) as the initial password to change it. You can also find the link to change your password in the top of the box on the left on the Blackboard login page.

Your userID is printed in the top right section of your Confirmation of Study form that the university sends you. It typically is the first six letters of your family name followed by the first four letters of your first name. If your name results in a userid that is the same as someone else's, there will be a number added to the end of your username. Look on your Confirmation of Study form to check your username.

Distance students are welcome to come to the class if they are in Wellington. Contact Peter Gu for details.

4. Announcements: MA notice board Level 2 Von Zedlitz

Some additional information relevant to this course can be found in the School MA Handbook for 2008. The handbook is available on the web.

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/degrees/docs/MA%20Handbook%202008.pdf>

For other additional information, please visit the Blackboard site for this course.

5. LALS main office: VZ 210, 2nd floor Von Zedlitz Building, Kelburn Parade

6. LALS 523 Course Administrator: Rachel Scholes, Postgraduate administration
Tel: 463 5600/463 5255/472 1000 ext 8386
Web contact: www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz

7. Aims: The general aim is to study the theory and practice of language assessment, with particular reference to classroom learning. Both formal tests and a range of alternative procedures are covered, having consideration for the purpose of the assessment and the requirements of the learning environment.

8. Objectives: By the end of the course, course members should

- 1 understand various approaches to assessment and how they relate to curriculum objectives in language education.
- 2 know what the qualities of good assessment are.
- 3 be familiar with a range of assessment procedures and be able to critically evaluate them.
- 4 demonstrate an ability to plan appropriate assessment for a learning context you are familiar with.

9. Content: The following topics will be covered in the course. The reading for each topic is indicated under the topic. The full references can be found in the table of contents of the set readings.

| Class date | Topic and set readings |
|-------------------|---|
| 12 March | Approaches to assessment <u>Notes:</u> "Introduction"; "Approaches to assessment", pp. 1-17 <u>Article:</u> Brown and Hudson (1998) |

- 19 March The limits of standards-based assessment
Notes: “Standards-based assessment”, pp. 10-17
Article: Brindley (1991)
- 26 March Assessment in the language classroom
Notes: “Testing in the classroom”, pp. 32-36
Article: Black & Wiliam (1998)
 [Available online at www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbla9810.htm]
- 2 April Assessing language knowledge
Notes: “Describing and assessing language ability”, pp. 18-24
Articles: Klein-Braley (1997); Schmitt, Schmitt & Clapham (2001)
- 9 April Qualities of good assessment
Notes: “Qualities of good assessment”, pp. 25-31
Article: Schmitt et al. (2001)
- [Mid-trimester break]
- 30 April Self-assessment
Notes: “Self-assessment”, pp. 37-39
Articles: Cram (1995); Harris (1997)
- 7 May Peer assessment, conferencing and other alternative methods
Article: Liu and Hansen (2002); Cheng & Warren (2005)
- 14 May Portfolio assessment
Notes: “Portfolio assessment”, pp. 40-45
Articles: Hirvela & Pierson (2000); Weigle (2002)
- 21 May Assessing productive skills
Notes: “Assessing speaking and writing ability”, pp. 53-65
Article: Foot (1999); Saville & Hargreaves (1999)
- 28 May Assessing receptive skills
Notes: “Assessing listening and reading ability”, pp. 46-52
Article: Read (2002)

Additional notes and suggested readings will be provided weekly.

10. Texts: A volume of notes and articles, with the title *LALS 523 Language Assessment Notes and Readings*, is available from the Student Notes Centre.

11. Assessment: Your performance in the course will be assessed by two shorter assignments and one long one:

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|--------------|
| Assignment 1, due Wed 2 April | 25% | (1000 words) |
| Assignment 2, due Wed 30 April | 25% | (1000 words) |
| Assignment 3, due Wed 4 June | 50% | (3000 words) |

Assignments can be submitted as e-mail attachments. Please submit each one as a single document in WORD format, and e-mail them to LALS-523@vuw.ac.nz. If you send them by

post, please include **two** copies of each assignment/task. One will be returned to you with comments on it. The other will be retained for external examining. The postal address is on page 1 of this outline. You can also hand them in through the Assignments slot by the door to the School Office (VZ 210). The assignment topics are described in this course outline.

N.B. Note that if no work is submitted for assessment before the last three weeks of teaching, there will be nothing on which to base an aegrotat consideration.

General Content Guidelines

- The assignment should relate to a particular language teaching/learning situation, but it doesn't have to be the same one for all the assignments.
- The assignment should show that you have done a significant amount of reading on the topic (course notes, set articles *and* other sources) and can apply what you have read to the teaching/learning situation you have chosen.
- Where the assignment topic requires you to prepare test or assessment material, the grading will be based partly on my evaluation of the quality of the material but more importantly on your discussion of how you went about designing, selecting and/or preparing the material for its intended purpose.

Assignment 1 (due Wednesday 28 March) 1000 words

Outline what you understand as the basic principles of standards-based assessment and discuss whether it can be effectively implemented in a language teaching context you are familiar with.

If so, what are some of the practical considerations which are needed to ensure that it will be effective?

If not, what practical considerations prevent it from being effectively implemented?

Assignment 2 (due Wednesday 2 May) 1000 words

Choose a suitable text and use it to prepare a gap-filling test (cloze, C-test or the like) to measure the lexical and/or grammatical knowledge of a particular group of learners. Explain the purpose of the test and the thinking behind the deletions you have made in the text. Try out the test with a group of learners *or alternatively* ask one or two native speakers to complete the test for you, and report on the results.

Assignment 3 (due Wednesday 6 June) 3000 words

Choose **one** of the following topics.

Either

Discuss the rationale for using one of the following approaches to assessment in a language teaching context you are familiar with:

- self-assessment
- peer assessment
- portfolios

Explain in practical terms how you will apply this approach in a particular language course. Include some appropriate assessment material (e.g., a self-assessment questionnaire;

guidelines for students on how to assess their peers' work, or on how to compile a portfolio; a rating scale to use in assessing their work)

[Note: Your proposed assessment procedures may include more than one of these approaches, but one of them should be the main focus.]

or

Choose **one** of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading or writing. Identify the teaching/learning objectives of a particular group of learners with regard to this skill and then discuss how you will assess their achievement of these objectives in a language course. Prepare some appropriate assessment material, which may take the form of an achievement test or some other kind(s) of assessment.

12. Penalties: There is no formal penalty for missing the deadline for submitting the assignments and tasks, but you must get permission in advance if you find that you have to hand work in late. Similarly, there is no penalty for *exceeding* the word limits given for the assignments; however, if the assignment is more than 20% shorter than the specified length, your grade may be lowered. In general, the word limit should not include any test or assessment material that you prepare.

13. Relationship between assessment and course objectives:

The assignments in general provide an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of issues involved in language assessment and to show the practical application of ideas covered in class and in the set readings. Assignment 1 relates to course objectives 1 and 2. Assignment 2 relates to objectives 1, 2, and 4. Assignment 3 relates to all four objectives.

14. Workload: LALS 523 is a fifteen point one-trimester paper. Course members should expect to spend about 12 hours per week for ten weeks on all the work for this course including lectures.

15. Mandatory Course Requirements (Terms): To receive a final grade for this course, you need to meet the following requirements:

- Submit all three assignments for assessment
- Attend all the ten class meetings, or make at least one contribution each week to the Discussion Board forum on Blackboard.

16. Attendance: On-campus course members must attend all ten lectures. If an absence is unavoidable, then the course member should participate in the Blackboard Discussion Board for that week. Course members studying by distance must make a contribution to each one of the ten Discussion Boards.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the

Victoria University Calendar available in hardcopy or under “about Victoria” on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under “Course Outline General Information” at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Student and Staff Conduct
- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support