TE WHARE WĀNANGA O TE ŪPOKO O TE IKA A MĀUI

VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

M. A. PROGRAMME
LALS 524: Language Testing

TRIMESTER 3 2010
15 November 2010 to 19 February 2011

Trimester dates
Teaching dates: 22 November 2010 to 11 February 2011
Mid-trimester/Christmas break: 20 December 2010 to 6 January 2011

Withdrawal dates
Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx

Course Coordinator & Lecturer

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Class times and rooms
Wednesday 4-6 pm, KP24201

Course delivery
The course is delivered in two modes: on campus and by distance. On campus classes are run as lectures plus workshops. For distance students, the course is available at http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz. Blackboard is Victoria's online teaching and learning system. In both modes, students are expected to participate actively in activities and discussions. Further information about Blackboard is available under Frequently Asked Questions, under the Study tab of the School website.

The class meets on the following ten dates:
November 24 December 1, 8, 15 [Break], January 5 (online), 12, 19, 26, and February 2, 9.

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-help@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/its and http://www.vuw.ac.nz/scs. If you are an international student the following site could be useful for you http://www.victoria-international.ac.nz/.

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

Communication of additional information
MA noticeboard Level 2 Von Zedlitz, and via Blackboard.

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

LALS 524 Course Administrator: TBA, Postgraduate administration
                                      Tel: 463 5600/463 5255/472 1000 ext 8386
                                      Web contact: www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz

Aims
The general aim is to undertake a survey of current concepts, procedures and issues in language testing, with the primary focus on the use of tests and examinations to assess the achievement or proficiency of second language learners.

Objectives
By the end of the course, course members should be able to

1) understand various approaches to assessment and the qualities of a good language test.
2) be familiar with a range of testing procedures and be able to critically evaluate them.
3) know what is involved in designing and developing a test for a particular purpose
4) demonstrate an ability to carry out certain aspects of the test development process, including some basic statistical analysis.

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.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	24 November	What is a language test?	McNamara, Chap 1, plus Text 1 (pp. 87-88) Readings: Brown & Hudson
2	1 December	Communication and the design of language tests	McNamara, Chap 2, plus Texts 2-5 (pp. 89-94) Readings: Fulcher; Bachman
3	8 December	The testing cycle	McNamara, Chap 3, plus Texts 6-7 (pp. 95-98) Readings: Bachman & Palmer; McDowell
4	15 December	Validity and validation	McNamara, Chap 5, plus Texts 12-13 (pp. 104-106) Readings: Messick; Wall, Clapham & Alderson
Christmas Break			
5	5 January Online	The design of test tasks	Readings: Read; Weir; Foot; Saville & Hargreaves; Kroll & Reid
6	12 January	Measurement	McNamara, Chap 6, plus Texts 14-15 (pp. 106-110) Readings: Alderson, Clapham & Wall
7	19 January	The rating process	McNamara, Chap 4, plus Texts 8-11 (pp. 98-104) Readings: A. Brown; Weigle
8	26 January	The social character of language tests	McNamara, Chap 7, plus Texts 16-19 (pp. 110-116) Readings: Shohamy
9	2 February	New directions and dilemmas	McNamara, Chap 8, plus Text 20 (pp. 116-119) Readings: Johnson & Brine; Stansfield
10	9 February	Language testing and language teaching	Reading: Cheng & Curtis; Wall; Hayes & Read

Texts
There are two required texts.

1. McNamara, T. (2000). *Language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. *LALS 524 Set Readings*

All textbooks and student notes (undergraduate and postgraduate) will be available for purchase from Vicbooks on the top floor of the Student Union Building.

Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered to

customers or they can be picked up from nominated collection points at each campus. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

Assessment
This course will be examined by in-term assessment only. The final grade will be awarded based on marks for the following two assignments and one task.

Assignment 1	due Wed 15 December	40%	(2000 words)	Course objective 1, 2
Assignment 2	due Friday 4 February	60%	(3000 words)	Course objectives 3, 4

Distance members of the course should submit your assignments through the Blackboard system. If Blackboard fails to work, assignments can also be submitted as e-mail attachments to LALS-MA@vuw.ac.nz. Please submit each assignment (including cover sheet) as a single document in MS WORD format. On-campus members of the course can submit your assignments in class. You can also hand them in through the Assignments slot by the door to the School Office (VZ 210). If you send them by post, the postal address is on page 1 of this outline.

For the on-campus group, your assignments and feedback will be returned to you in class. Or you can collect them at the School Office. Feedback for the distance group will be done through Blackboard or through email.

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.

The assignment topics are described below.

Assignment 1 (2000 words) (due Wednesday 15 December, 2010)

Write a *concise* review of an existing test. The review should include an analytical description of the test and an evaluation of how good it is for its intended purpose. It should be a test that you can obtain adequate information about, from sources such as a test manual, user handbook, research report, your own involvement in the testing programme and/or an interview with someone else with direct involvement. (It is not sufficient to base the review simply on a sample test paper.) The main options to choose from are:

- a major international proficiency test, such as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, MELAB or one of the Cambridge Main Suite Exams (FCE, CAE, CPE, etc)
- a published test such as the Oxford Placement Test or the Quick Placement Test
- a test administered on a reasonably large scale by a university, school or other institution (not one for a particular class or course).

If you choose one of the large-scale tests, you should focus on just one component, e.g., IELTS Reading, the TOEFL writing test, FCE listening.

Here are some points to include (don't try to cover all of them – be selective):

Background Information
   The purpose of the test (for what kinds of decisions?)
   The educational and/or social context

Test Design and Procedures
   The content and format of each part of the test
      (types of text, items, tasks)
   The scoring or rating procedures
   The adequacy of the information about the test available to teachers and
learners

The Quality of the Test
   Validity
      The suitability of the test for its intended purpose(s)
      The relevance of the test to language teaching objectives
   Reliability
      What evidence there is that the test produces consistent, dependable
results
      (if subjective judgements are involved, how well trained are the
raters/markers?)
   Practicality
      Whether the test can be administered and scored adequately, given the
      resources available

Do not just describe the test; add as many analytical and evaluative comments as you can.

Assignment 2 (3000 words) (due Friday 4 February, 2011)

Design your own test. This involves the whole process of test design and validation, i.e., designing, piloting, analysing, and revising a test for a particular purpose, and producing a test report. There are two options. Option 1 focuses on a placement test for the EPP programme at VUW. Option 2 focuses on a test of your own choice. Option 1 is for on-campus course members; and option 2 is for the distance group. The purpose of the assignment is to give you first hand experience in test design and analysis.

Option 1: Designing an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) placement test

This involves the design and development of a placement test. The assignment should include the design and validation processes of your test designed for the placement of

students entering the English Proficiency Programme (EPP) at VUW. Trialling of the test has been arranged for you on 17 December in the afternoon.

Course members on campus are encouraged to work in small groups of three or four. You will work together to design, trial, and analyse your test. The final assignment you submit, however, should be written up individually.

The EPP programme
At Victoria University, 12-week intensive EAP programmes are taught at the Wellington and Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam campuses three times a year. In Wellington, most students are preparing to study undergraduate or postgraduate programmes at a New Zealand university. In Vietnam, most students are studying EAP courses to progress onto the Victoria University Bachelor of Commerce and Administration (BCA) twinning programme (in partnership with the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh).

The students
Students come from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Cambodian, Chilean, German, Japanese, Korean, Malaysian, Russian, Saudi, Samoan, Somali, Vietnamese) and aim to study across a wide range of academic disciplines. Their time in New Zealand varies from a few years to a week and they range from 17-72 years old, but mostly cluster around their early 20s. Their entry level English language proficiency range from IELTS 4.0 to IELTS 7.0. The majority enter at 5.0-5.5.

The placement test
To determine where to place students in the academic language courses, currently four tests are administered at a single sitting:
- 35-minute vocabulary test – match six items with eight given meanings (17 sets of 6 = total score of 102)
- 40-minute C-test – four passages of increasing difficulty with 25 incomplete words in each
- 15-minute dictation
- 20-minute writing sample

The same placement tests are used on Day 1 of every intensive course in Wellington. In Vietnam, the same tests are used much more frequently as part of the marketing team's strategy to increase the prospective number of students entering the BCA in each of three trimesters. Ideally, we would have three to four different sets of placement tests which are found to be reliable, valid and easily administered and marked.

The placement test is among a group of measures used to place students into two levels which will then follow two distinctive curriculum arrangements. The upper level is called EPP (English Proficiency Programme) and the lower level is called PREPP (preparation for EPP).

Students placed in the PREPP group are able to express familiar concepts in some academic tasks in a limited way. They are expected to be able to perform simple

academic tasks in all skills at the end of the course. Students placed in the EPP group are able to perform with reasonable accuracy and fluency in a range of limited academic tasks. At the end of the course, they are expected to be able to study at foundation, undergraduate or postgraduate programmes where English is the medium of instruction.

Option 2: Designing your own test

This involves the design and development of a test for a specified purpose, preferably for a population of learners you are working with or are familiar with. The work for the assignment should include the trialling of at least some of the test material with a suitable group of learners, plus an analysis of the results, and suggested revisions based on the analysis.

Relationship between assessment and course objectives
The assignments provide an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of issues involved in language testing, to evaluate a range of testing procedures, and to experience the designing and developing of a language test.

Workload
LALS 524 is a fifteen point one-trimester paper. The expected number of hours to cover this course is 150 over the trimester.

Penalties
Assignments and tasks must be submitted by the due date. There is no penalty for late submission but permission must be sought and a good reason given. Try to keep within the word limits. No credit will be given for work beyond the word limits. *Assignments which are plagiarised will not receive a grade and cannot be resubmitted*.

Mandatory Course Requirements
In order to meet these requirements, course members must
  • attend all the ten classes or participate at least once in each of the ten Blackboard-based discussions, and
  • complete the 2 assignments.

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.

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx

GENERAL UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND STATUTES

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* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx