VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

MASTER OF ARTS (MA)
LALS 524: Language Testing

TRIMESTER 3 2012
19 November 2012 to 24 February 2013

Trimester dates
LALS524 teaching dates: 19 November 2012 to 17 February 2013
Mid-trimester/Christmas break: 22 December 2012 to 6 January 2013
Assignment 1 due: 19 December 2012
Assignment 2 due: 15 February 2013

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

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Class times and rooms
Wednesday 4-6 pm, 24KP 201

Teaching/learning summary
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 21, 28, December 5, 12, 19 [Break], January 9, 16, 23, 30 and February 13.

Distance students should access the course 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
Additional information about this course and information about any changes will be posted on the course website in Blackboard and announced in on--campus classes.

Course prescription
A study of the design, development and analysis of language tests, especially for the purpose of assessing achievement or proficiency in a second language.

Learning 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 readings for each topic are indicated under the topic. The full references can be found in the table of contents of the set readings.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	21 November	What is a language test?	McNamara, Chap 1, plus Text 1 (pp. 87-88) Readings: Brown & Hudson
2	28 November	Communication and the design of language tests	McNamara, Chap 2, plus Texts 2-5 (pp. 89-94) Readings: Fulcher; Bachman
3	5 December	The testing cycle and test qualities	McNamara, Chap 3, plus Texts 6-7 (pp. 95-98) Readings: Bachman & Palmer; McDowell
4	12 December	Validity and validation	McNamara, Chap 5, plus Texts 12-13 (pp. 104-106) Readings: Messick; Wall, Clapham & Alderson
5	19 December	The design of test tasks	Readings: Read; Weir; Foot; Saville & Hargreaves; Kroll & Reid
		Christmas Break 22 December 2012 to 6 January 2013	
6	9 January	Measurement	McNamara, Chap 6, plus Texts 14-15 (pp. 106-110) Readings: Alderson, Clapham & Wall
7	16 January	The rating process	McNamara, Chap 4, plus Texts 8-11 (pp. 98-104) Readings: A. Brown; Weigle
8	23 January	The social character of language tests	McNamara, Chap 7, plus Texts 16-19 (pp. 110-116) Readings: Shohamy; McNamara
9	30 January	New directions and dilemmas	McNamara, Chap 8, plus Text 20 (pp. 116-119) Readings: Canagarajah; Douglas & Hegelheimer
10	13 February	Language testing and language teaching	Reading: Cheng & Curtis; Wall; Muñoz & Álvarez

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

Other readings, where necessary, are posted on Blackboard in pdf format.

All textbooks and student notes for the third trimester will be available from vicbooks on Level 4 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.

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

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.

Assignment 1   due Wed 19 December   40%   (2000 words)   Course objectives 1, 2
Assignment 2   due Friday 15 February   60%   (3000 words)   Course objectives 3, 4

All course members should submit your assignments through the Blackboard system. This means that on-campus students will now need to submit an electronic copy to BB so that your papers are analysed with Turnitin, and a hardcopy either in class or in the dropbox. Please submit each assignment (including cover sheet) as a single document in MS WORD format. DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR ASSIGNMENT IN PDF FORMAT.

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 19 December, 2012) (40%)
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). On-campus students are encouraged to analyse a past test of the VUW EPP programme.

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 15 February, 2013) (60%)
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. The purpose of the assignment is to give you first hand experience in test design and analysis. There are two options. Option 1 focuses on a test of your own choice and is mainly for the distance group. Option 2 focuses on a practice test for the EPP programme at VUW. This Option is mainly for on-campus course members.

Option 1: 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. Useful tests previous course members have designed include, for example, English test for ski

coaches, EFL proficiency test for Christian brothers, and a placement test for the EPP programme at VUW. 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.

Option 2: Designing a practice test for students taking the EPP exit test
This involves the design and validation of a practice test for students in the English Proficiency Programme (EPP) at VUW before they take the EPP exist test. The assignment should include the design and validation processes of your practice test designed for these students. Piloting of the test will be arranged for you before your test is ready.

Course members on campus are encouraged to work in small groups of three or four. You will work together to design, administer, and analyse your test. The final assignment you submit, however, should be written up individually. More details about the EPP programme, the students, and the exit test will be provided in class.

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.

A marking sheet with detailed marking criteria will be available on Blackboard. The marking criteria focus on understanding, knowledge (Course objectives 1 and 3) and application (Course objectives 1 and 3) of the knowledge and skills obtained in this course.

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.

Class Representative

The class representative for the MA programme is Rebecca White (whiterebe6@myvuw.ac.nz). Her contact details are available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. As the class representative, Rebecca provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

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

Use of Turnitin

Student work provided for assessment in this course will be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine http://www.turnitin.com. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

Where to find more detailed information

Find key dates, explanations of grades and other useful information at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study. Find out how academic progress is monitored and how enrolment can be restricted at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress. Most statutes and policies are available at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy, except qualification statutes, which are

available via the *Calendar* webpage at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/calendar (See Section C).

Other useful information for students may be found at the Academic Office website, at www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic.