



FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES

**MA PROGRAMME
LALS 523 LANGUAGE ASSESSMENT
15 POINTS**

TRIMESTER 1 2015

Important dates

Trimester dates: 2 March to 1 July 2015

Teaching dates: 2 March to 5 June 2015

Easter/Mid-trimester break: 3–19 April 2015

Last assessment item due: 5 June 2015

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds. If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats.

Class times and locations

Tuesdays 4:10 pm-6:00 pm, von Zedlitz 104

Names and contact details

Course coordinator and lecturer:

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Course administrator:

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Communication of additional information

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

Prescription

A study of 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.

Course 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	Class date	Topic	Set readings
1	3 March	Approaches to assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Introduction"; "Approaches to assessment", pp. 1-17 • <i>Article</i>: Brown and Hudson (1998)
2	10 March	Standards-based assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Standards-based assessment", pp. 10-17 • <i>Article</i>: Brindley (1991)
3	17 March	Classroom assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Testing in the classroom", pp. 32-36 • <i>Article</i>: Black and William (1998)
4	24 March	Assessing language knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Describing and assessing language ability", pp. 18-24 • <i>Articles</i>: Klein-Braley (1997); Schmitt, Schmitt and Clapham (2001)
5	31 March	Qualities of good assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Qualities of good assessment", pp. 25-31 • <i>Article</i>: Schmitt et al. (2001)
Easter break: 3–19 April 2015			
6	21 April	Self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Self-assessment", pp. 37-39 • <i>Articles</i>: Cram (1995); Harris (1997)
7	28 April	Peer assessment, conferencing and other alternative methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Articles</i>: Liu and Hansen (2002); Cheng & Warren (2005)
8	5 May	Portfolio assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Portfolio assessment", pp. 40-45 • <i>Articles</i>: Hirvela and Pierson (2000); Weigle (2002)
9	12 May	Assessing productive skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Assessing speaking and writing ability", pp. 53-65 • <i>Articles</i>: Foot (1999); Saville and Hargreaves (1999)
10	19 May	Assessing receptive skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Notes</i>: "Assessing listening and reading ability", pp. 46-52 • <i>Article</i>: Read (2002)

Additional notes and suggested readings will be provided weekly.

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course should be able to:

- 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, and
- 4) demonstrate an ability to plan appropriate assessment for a learning context you are familiar with.

Teaching format

The course is delivered in two modes: on campus and by distance. On campus classes are run 2 hours a week 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. Distance course members should reserve at least 2 hours a week to participate in online discussions on the topic of the week. In both modes, students are expected to participate actively in activities and discussions.

The on campus class meets on the following ten dates: 3, 10, 17, 24, 31 March [Easter/mid-trimester break], 21, 28 April, 5, 12, 19 May. The distance group participates in online class discussions during each corresponding week.

Before you log into Blackboard or make any use of your Victoria University programs, you will need to change your original password. 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 of the Blackboard login page.

Your username 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 username 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.

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

- submit two assignments for assessment
- attend all the ten class meetings, post a weekly blog on Blackboard (on-campus group); or post a weekly blog on Blackboard, and make at least one discussion contribution each week to the Discussion Board forum on Blackboard (distance group).

Workload

LALS 523 is a 15-point one-trimester course. Course members should expect to spend about 15 hours per week for ten weeks (150 hours across the trimester) on all the work for this course including lectures. Class attendance for on-campus members or discussions on Blackboard for the distance group take 20 hours. All other course work, e.g., reading and reviewing, blogging, doing assignments, takes about 130 hours. I suggest that you spend at least 50 hours on reading, 10 hours on blogging, 20 hours attending class or participating in Blackboard discussions, and 70 hours on the assignments.

Assessment

Your performance in the course will be assessed by ten weekly blogs and two assignments:

Assessment items	Workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
Weekly blogs and online contributions	1,500 words (150 words per week)	10%	1, 2, 3	Before 23:59 every Sunday
Assignment 1	1,500 words	40%	1, 2	Thursday 2 April, 23:59
Assignment 2	2,000 words	50%	1, 2, 3, 4	Friday 5 June, 23:59

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.

Format Guidelines

- Your assignments should be in *MS Word format*. Do not submit a pdf file through BB.
- Set margins to at least 2.5 cm
- Set line spacing to 1.5
- Set font size of 12 point
- Include page numbers
- Include a title page which shows the course number and name, your name, the course lecturer, the title of the assignment, and the date the assignment is due
- Provide a word count at the end of the assignment (not including the Reference section)
- *Follow APA citation guidelines.*

Weekly blog posts (due before 23:59 every Sunday)

150 words x 10 weeks = 1,500 words

All course members are expected to produce a weekly blog post of 150 words that summarises your understanding of and commentary on an issue that is of interest to you from the weekly readings. You are welcome to incorporate some of these blog posts into your assignments.

You are encouraged to use the following structure for the blogs, although other meaningful structures will be fine as well:

- The issue you identify from the readings, notes, and your reflections of the week.
- Your personal comments on the issue (e.g., why it is interesting/meaningful/important to you, your agreement/disagreement, relevance to you and your context of teaching/learning, research insights, practical utilities, etc.)

Assignment 1 (due Thursday 2 April)

1,500 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 Friday 5 June)

2,000 words

Assignment 2 focuses on understanding and implementation of formative assessment in your own teaching. The assignment is divided into two parts:

- 1) Read Dirksen (2011) as an anchor article, and list at least five additional activities you can think of that can be used as formative assessment. Classify these activities into meaningful categories, (e.g., before class, during class, after class, or any other meaningful dimensions like the four skills, grammar, vocabulary, etc.). List core features that are shared. Supplement this with your readings and develop a full list of core features of formative assessment.
- 2) Focus on ONE activity that can be used as formative assessment of an aspect of ESL/EFL learning (e.g., developing oral fluency, understanding tense, or vocabulary building), and outline the materials and procedures you can use to carry it out in your teaching. Evaluate this activity against the list of core features of formative assessment you have developed. With a particular target group of students in a target teaching context in mind, comment on the benefits and drawbacks of this activity.

Other assessment information:

Marking criteria

Marking criteria will be posted on Blackboard.

Attendance

On-campus course members must attend all ten lectures and submit a weekly blog. 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 submit a weekly blog post and make a contribution to each one of the ten Discussion Boards.

Submission and return of work

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 Blackboard so that their papers are analysed with Turnitin, and a hardcopy either in class or in the drop box. Please submit each assignment (including cover sheet) as a single document in MS WORD format. **DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR ASSIGNMENT IN PDF FORMAT.**

No formal feedback will be provided for the weekly blogs, although you will read my commentaries from time to time either following your blogs or under Discussion forum.

Feedback is expected two to three weeks after the submission of your assignment. For the on-campus group, your assignments and feedback will be returned to you in class or uploaded on Blackboard. Feedback for the distance group will be given 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.

Extensions and penalties

Extensions

Blog posts should be submitted no later than the Sunday of the week. There is no formal penalty for missing the deadline for submitting the assignments, but you must get permission in advance if you find that you have to hand work in late.

Penalties

There is no penalty for *exceeding* the word limits given for the assignments; however, if the assignment is more than 20% shorter or 10% longer 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.

Set texts

A volume of notes and articles, with the title LALS 523 Language Assessment Notes and Readings, is available from Vicbooks. Other readings will be posted to Blackboard where necessary.

Postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from Vicbooks.

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. Check www.vicbooks.co.nz for opening hours.

Recommended reading

Recommended readings will be posted on Blackboard as needed.

Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative for the MA programme will be announced in class soon after the course begins.

Student feedback

Enhancements made to this course, based on the feedback of previous students, will be covered during the course. One change this year is the addition of options for assignment 2 to make the assignment more concrete and more practical. Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract

- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure
- Victoria graduate profile: www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz