# Key Questions in EAP Assessment

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# Who do you know?

Ken Hyland

Averil Coxhead

Olwyn Alexander

Ian Bruce

Edward de Chazal

Helen Basturkmen

Christine Feak

Sheena Gardner

Andy Gillett

# Who do you know?

Carol Chapelle

Uta Knoch

Cyril Weir

Lia Plakans

Glenn Fulcher

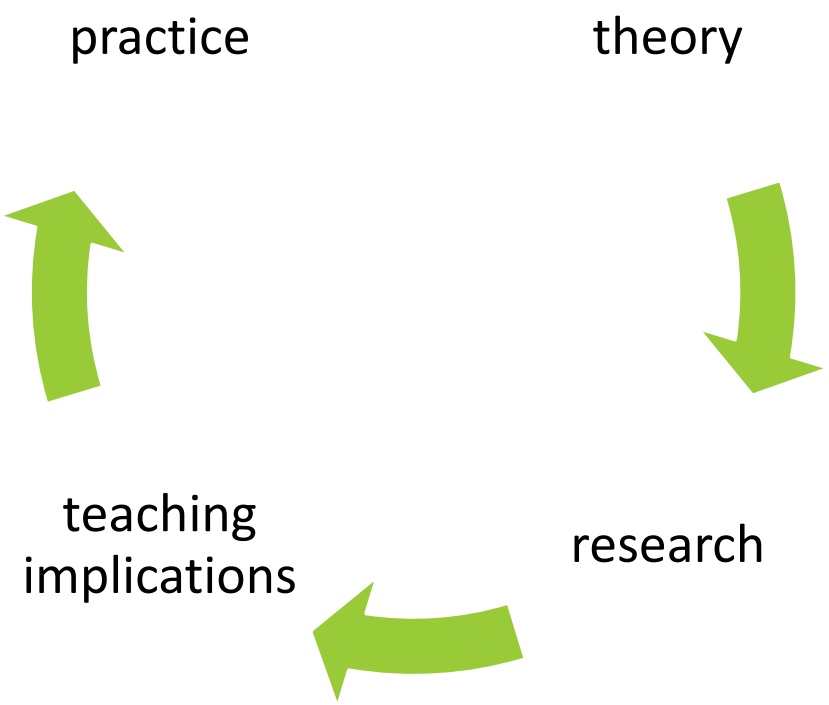
Tony Green

Gad Lim

John Read

Sara Weigle

# The research/practice loop



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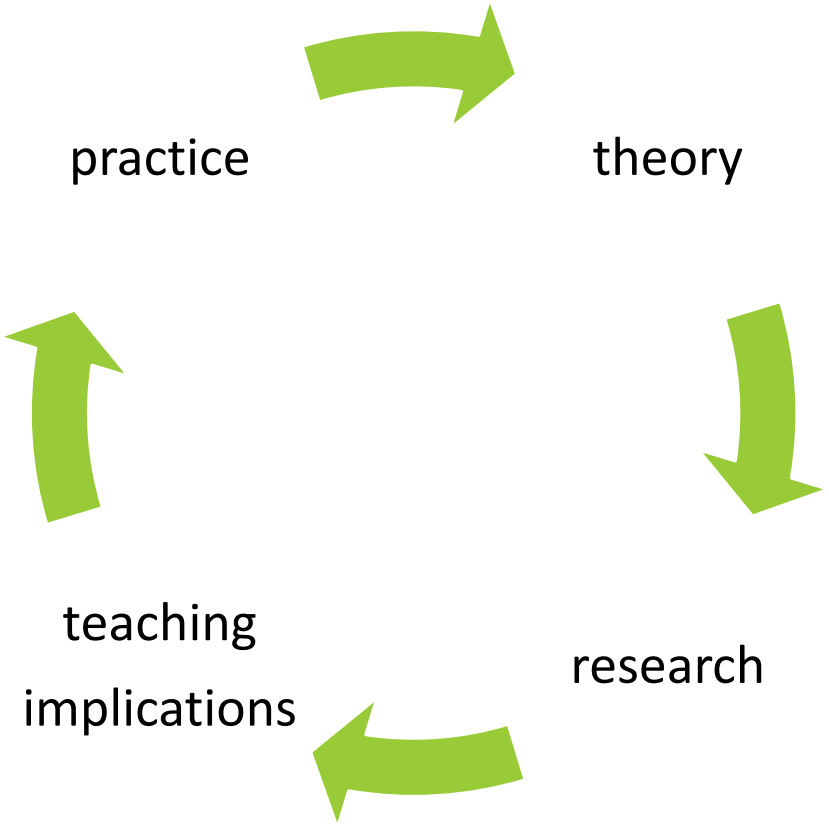
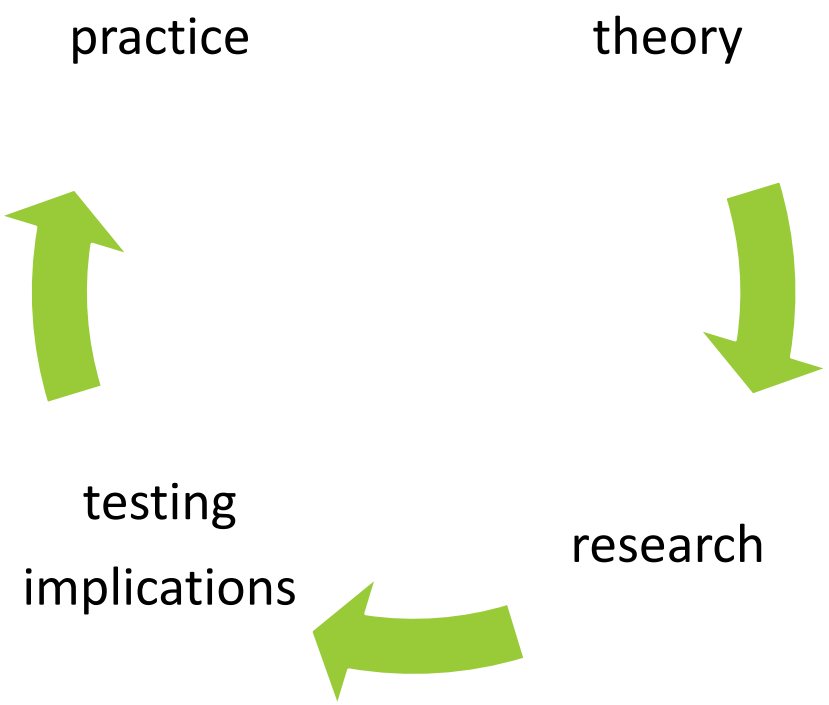


# Where are EAP practitioners in the testing loop?



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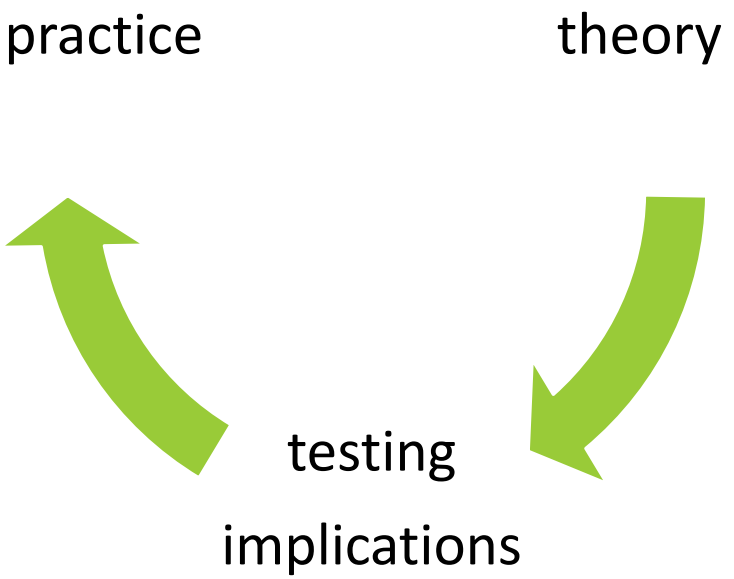
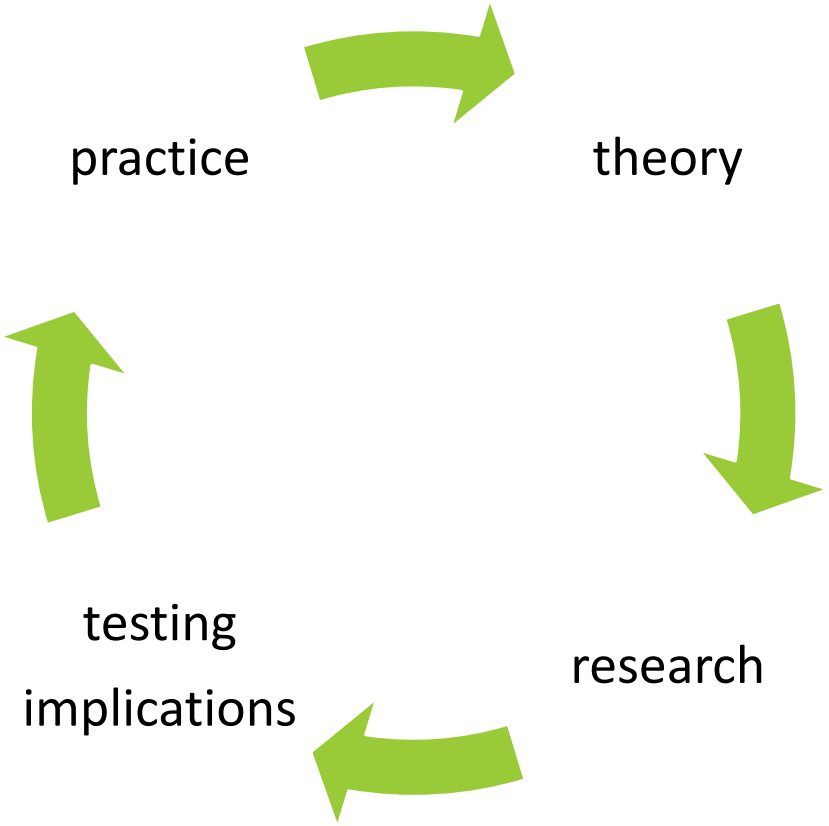


# Questions for the Audience

- How many people here today have taken a course on language testing?
- How many of you read books on language testing? Or journal articles?
- How many of you have attended a testing conference?
- How many of you lurk on L-Test?
- Have you ever published anything relating to your EAP assessments?  If yes, where?

# Closing the loop



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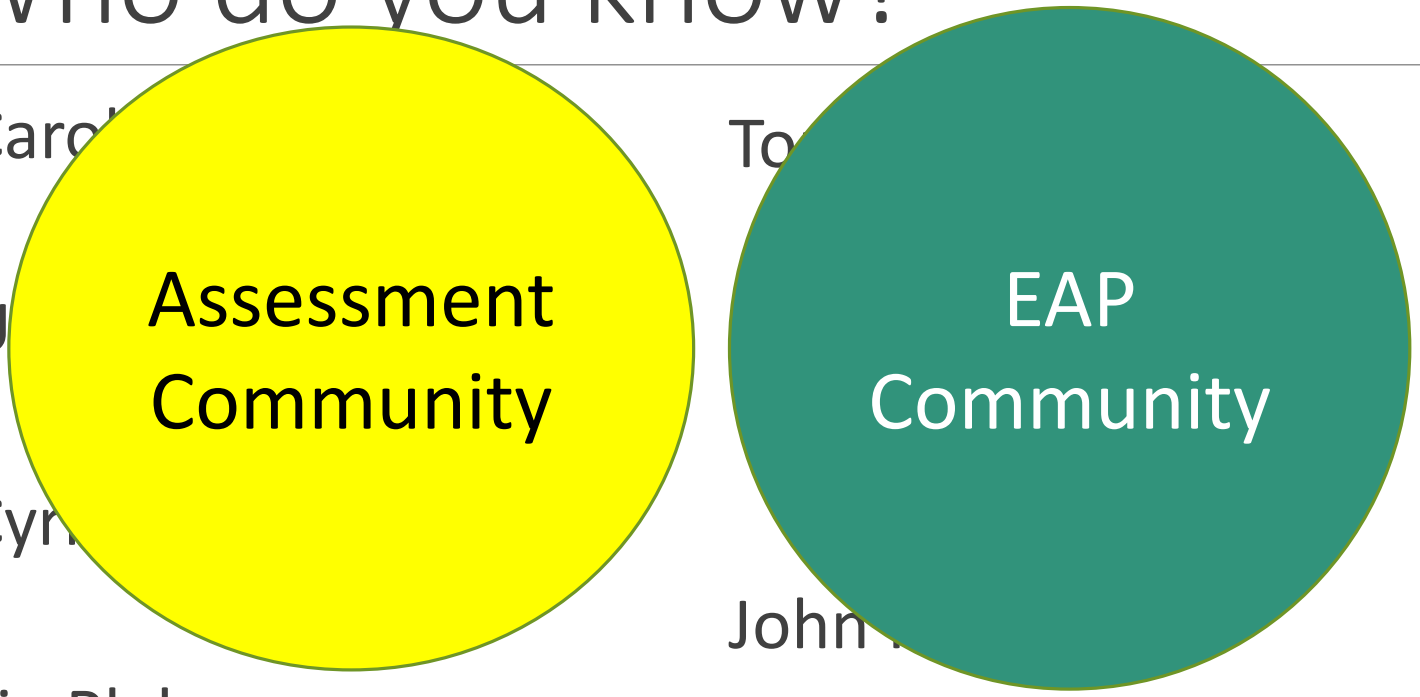



Caro

U

Cyr

Lia Plakans

Glenn Fulcher

To

John

Sara Weigle

ealta_sig_seminar_2015_programme.pdf

# Issues

- Should students who fail pre-sessionals be offered resits?
- Should our assessments be mapped to IELTS?
- How much assessment is needed? Complex EAP assessment is difficult to manage and teachers really suffer from the workload.
- Working for authenticity, e.g. integration of skills, creates complications, especially when we are required to report scores for the 4 skills

# Global vs Local

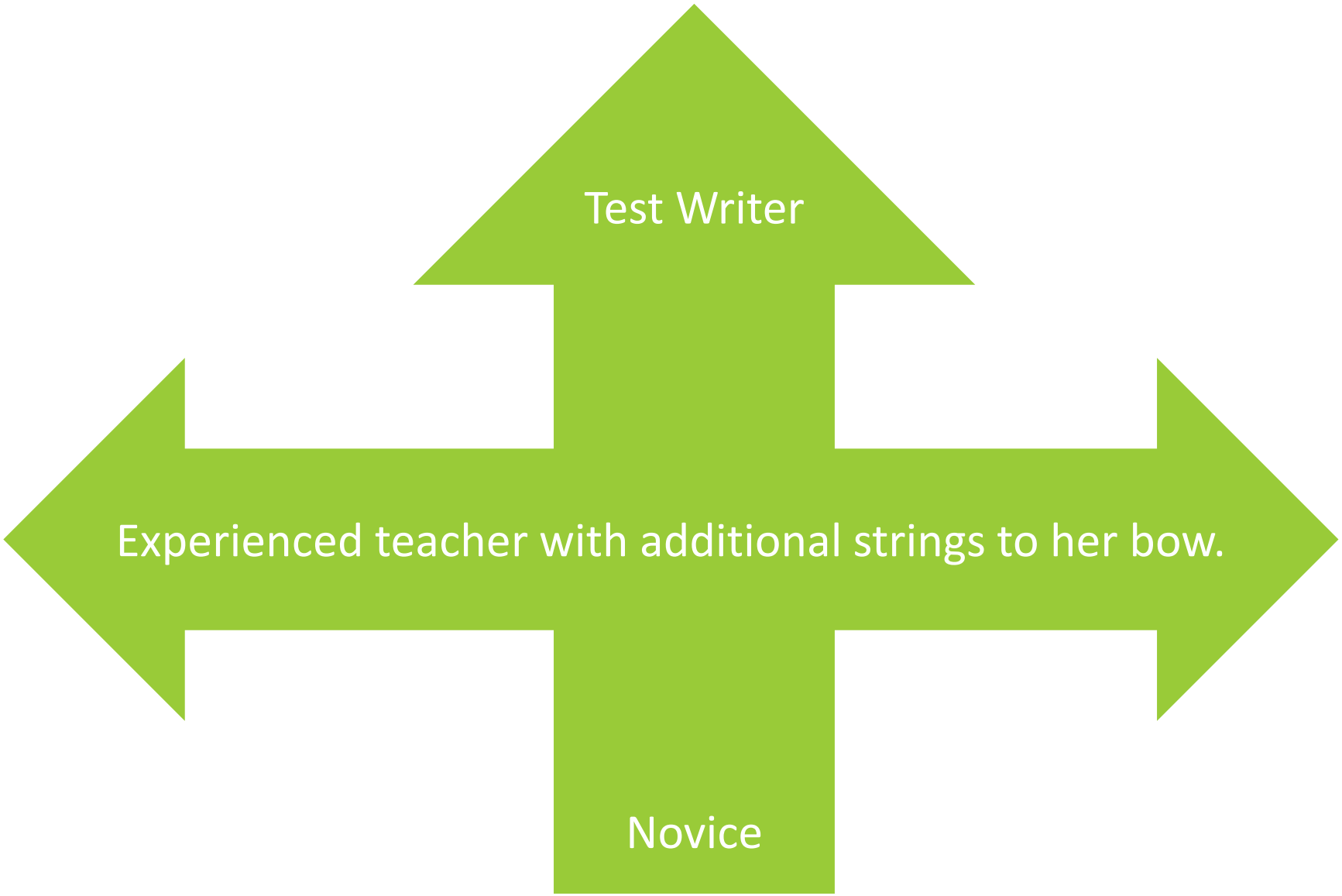
"In almost all circumstances, l… e more likely to allow us… assumptions al…

Opp… s to focus on … texts and to offer tests … fit local requirements

I… sed threats to test quality and claims relating to test level

O'Sullivan (2011:265 & 270)

Is the quality of the assessment in your EAP unit planned action or (un)happy accident?




# EAP teacher development

# EAP Assessment in your unit

- Who looks after EAP assessment? Individuals or is there a designated team?
- How much release time from teaching these teachers get?
- Do these teachers have access to specific staff development for assessment?
- What is the timeline for the development of assessments? Is there time for pre and post-review of the quality of your assessments?
- How does size of your unit affect assessment development?

5.6.1 **Assessment content and procedures will be linked to the academic needs of the students and to their future studies.**

5.6.2 **Students will be informed in advance of assessment procedures to be used on the Course.**

5.6.3 **Students will receive timely and useful feedback on their progress and on their strengths and weaknesses.**

5.6.4 **On intensive courses of more than one month, formal assessment of students' progress will be carried out at regular intervals with feedback given and records kept.**

5.6.5 **Students will be encouraged to monitor and take responsibility for their own progress.**

5.6.6 **Exit assessment procedures and reports will be comprehensible and useful to both the student and the recipient subject-specialist department.**

5.6.7 **All student placement and assessment procedures will be related to explicit criteria and measures will be taken to ensure standardisation, fairness and consistency in these procedures across teachers and tasks.**

5.6.8 **Information on well-established external examinations in English for Academic Purposes will be available for students who wish to take such an examination. Students requiring external certification of general English Language Proficiency will receive advice regarding availability of such tests.**

## *ASSESSMENT*

- ***Information on entrance requirements for course(s) to be accredited.***
- ***Information given to students on placement procedures and assessment procedures (including any testing).***
- ***Account of procedures for record keeping, reporting to sponsors, departments, etc. and sample documents.***
- ***Sample of test reports or certificates that are given to students.***
- ***Account of procedures for ensuring fairness and equivalency of assessment procedures.***
- ***Information regarding any external examinations for which students are entered.***

departments and faculty, and will be comprehensible and relevant to students and receiving departments. Specifically:

5.6.1 **The overall course design will link explicitly to summative assessments, providing clear routes of progression. These will be made known to both teachers and students, taking into account those students joining at later entry points.**

5.6.2 **Assessment will be as closely linked to receiving departments' academic expectations as possible, in terms of both content and procedures. This might be achieved by dialogue with academic staff, analysis of sample coursework and exams and/or access to sample scripts.**

5.6.3 **Students will be informed in advance of assessment procedures and criteria to be used on the Course, including any opportunities for resubmitting coursework or resitting exams for students who failed to meet the required level.**

5.6.4 **Students will receive timely and useful feedback on their progress and on their strengths and weaknesses.**

5.6.5 **On intensive courses of more than one month, formal assessment of students' progress will be carried out at regular intervals with feedback given and records kept.**

5.6.6 **Measures will be taken to ensure standardisation, fairness and consistency in all student placement and assessment procedures across teachers and tasks.**

5.6.7 **Students will be encouraged to monitor and take responsibility for their own progress, with particular attention paid to the take up of feedback from their teachers.**

5.6.8 **Exit assessment procedures and reports will be**

AND PROGRESSION

- Information on entrance requirements for course(s) to be accredited.
- Information given to students on placement procedures (including testing) and assessment procedures (including opportunities for resubmitting coursework or resitting exams).
- Evidence of discussion of assessment with other departments.
- Account of procedures for ensuring fairness and equivalency of assessment procedures (including examples of assessment criteria given to students and standardisation sessions with staff).
- Evidence of written or oral feedback on performance given to students.
- Account of procedures for record keeping, reporting to sponsors, departments, etc. and sample documents.
- Sample test reports or certificates given to students and receiving departments.

## C2. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICE

*An EAP practitioner will be able assess academic language and skills competence using appropriate formative and summative assessment and provide appropriate feedback:*

| Professional Knowledge & Values: C2 | Example CPD Tasks and Indicative Evidence: C2 | Core Professional Area of Activity competence in: | Indicative Evidence: C2 | Range requirement: |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. the purpose, structure, use and relevance of international proficiency tests e.g., IELTS and TOEFL in an academic context<br>b. the range of assessment required in tertiary institution academic subject contexts<br>c. different modes and purposes of EAP specific assessment<br>d. principles of valid and reliable EAP assessment design and marking criteria<br>e. the link between assessment content and procedures to student needs and academic studies<br>f. the principles, procedures and best practice in feedback and feed-forward approaches to assessment<br>g. The range of and use of learning technologies in assessment and feedback<br>h. The need to ensure equality of opportunity in assessment and feedback | a. A critical comparison of several international test specifications and their uses<br>b. Sample assessments and descriptive statement<br>c. Comparison of example EAP assessments with statement on uses<br>d. Comparison and critique of example assessments<br>e. Learner group profile and test specification statement<br>f. Institutional feedback policy guidelines and personal statement on own practice.<br>g. Comparative evaluation of learning technology options<br>or **Recognised Prior Learning** | i. delivering appropriate modes of assessment<br>ii. linking assessment outcomes to inform teaching and learning in EAP<br>iii. implementing principles of standardization, moderation, exam administration and invigilation<br>iv. applying marking criteria consistently and to agreed standards<br>v. giving appropriate feedback and feed-forward on student assessed performance<br>vi. evaluating assessment instruments<br>vii. using the results of assessment to inform teaching | i. Personal statement justifying assessment instrument<br>ii. 2 lesson plans with statement on assessment alignment<br>iii. Witness Statement on the application of marking criteria to assessment instruments<br>iv. Samples of graded assessments<br>v. Feedback samples and critique<br>vi. Example evaluation<br>vii. Sample results and evidence of action | **Types:**<br>Any 3 of:<br>Writing<br>Speaking<br>Listening<br>Reading<br>Study Skills<br>Integrated |

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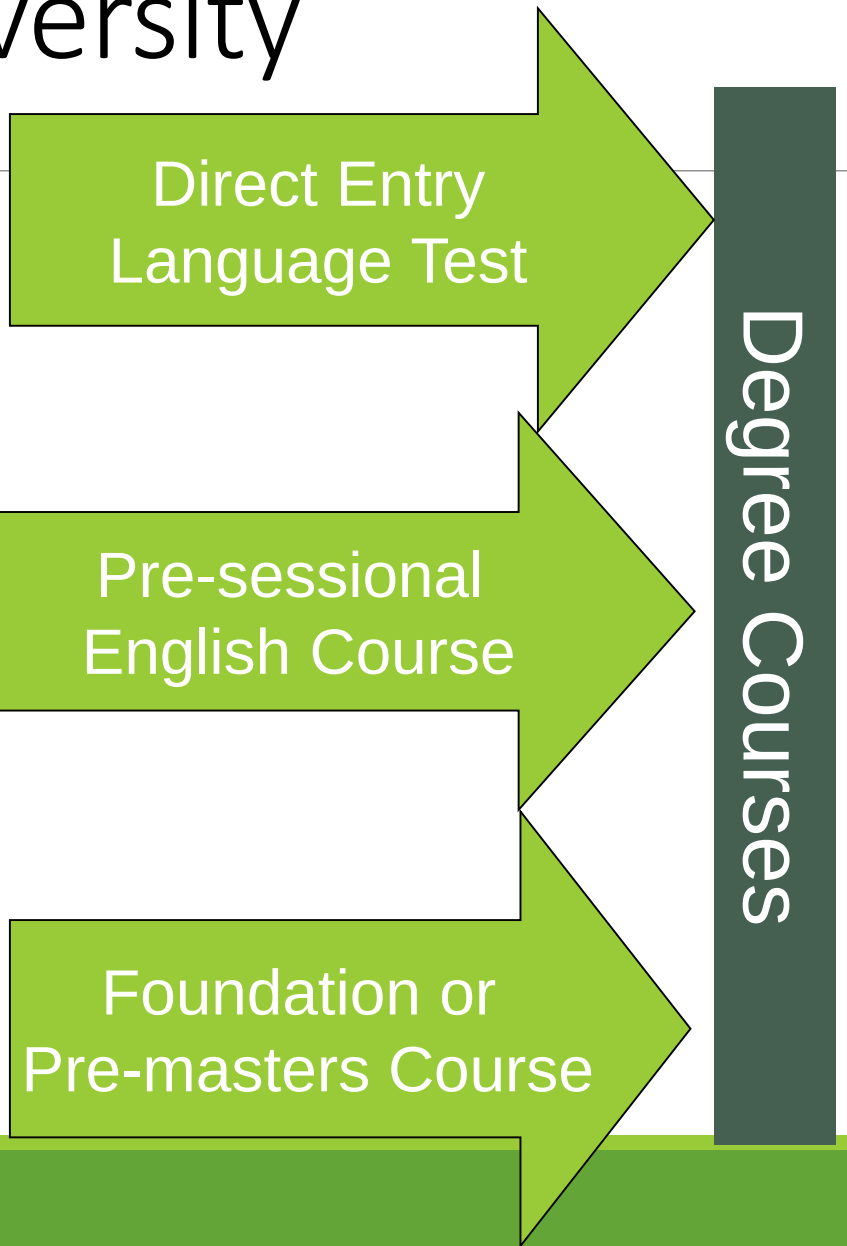
# Key Questions

- What are we assessing?
  - Should we be assessing proficiency or achievement?
- Has the quest for authenticity in EAP programme assessment compromised the reliability of our assessments?
  - How do we ensure equivalence across administrations?
- How generalizable are the results from students' performances on our assessments?
  - Is the teaching testing/mix right?
- Does all EAP programme assessment have to be high stakes?

# What are we assessing?

- IELTS, TOEFL and other similar exams assess whether or not a student knows enough English to benefit from instruction.
- Assessment on pre-sessional, foundation or pre-masters programme should tell us whether or not students have benefited from our instructional programmes.

# Routes into university



# The conditional offer

Why are students given conditional offers?

- They have not met the entry requirements for the university
  - i.e. their language level is lower than required

# Value Added

EAP courses

- teach students how to apply language to specific academic situations
- provide multiple opportunities for students to engage with both language and academic content
- teach more than language
  - In fact, language learning may be incidental to learning how to take notes in lectures, write essays and give presentations.

# Multiple Observations

EAP Exam

- 3-4 hours

EAP Course

- 5-weeks – 100 hours
- 10 weeks – 200 hours

# Different types of assessment

## Proficiency tests

Not linked to a particular syllabus

A point in time snapshot of student ability

Limited range of assessments tasks

## Achievement Assessment

Linked to a particular syllabus

Multiple observations of student ability at different dates and times

Wider range of assessment tasks

# Score gains on IELTS Writing (Green, 2005:57)

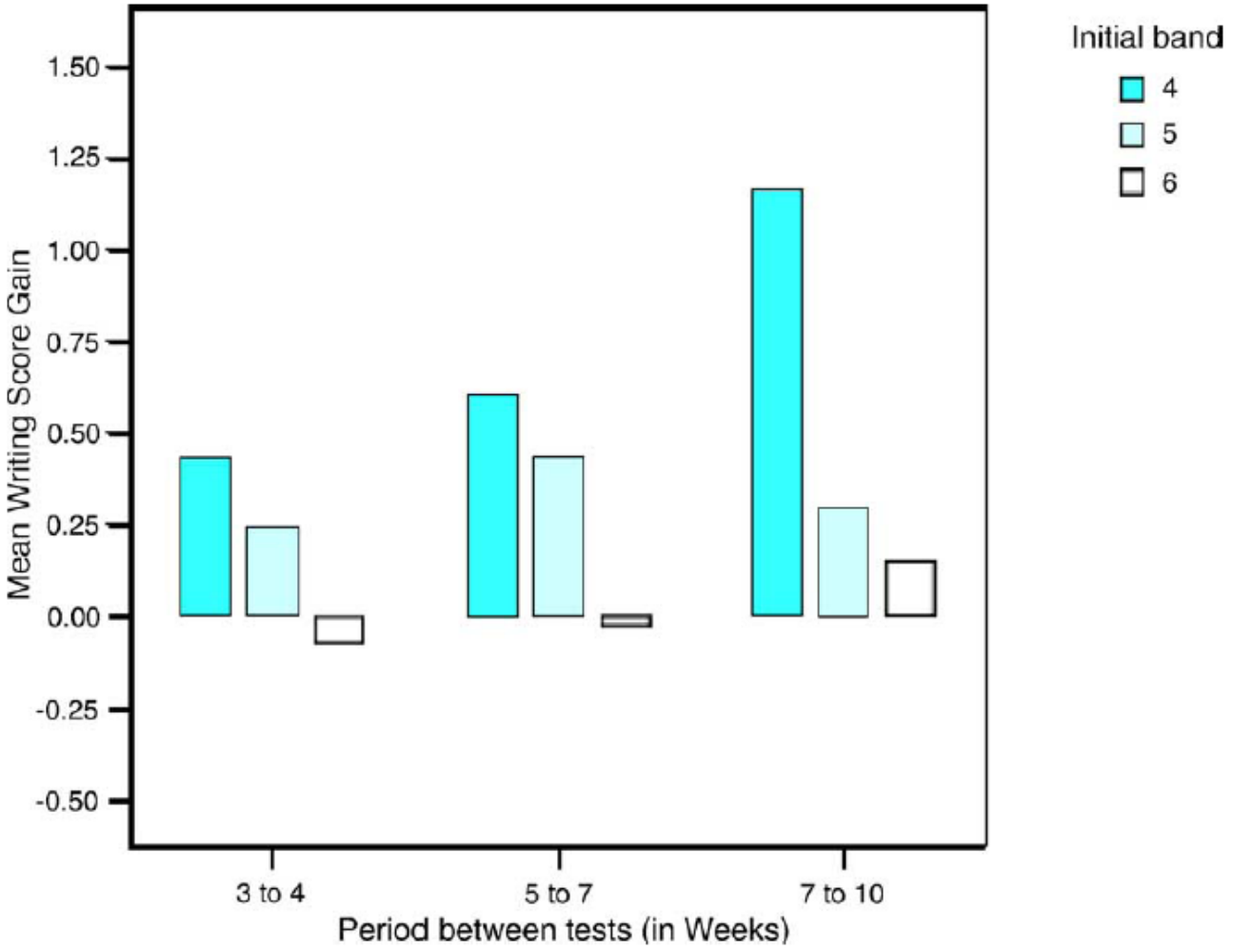
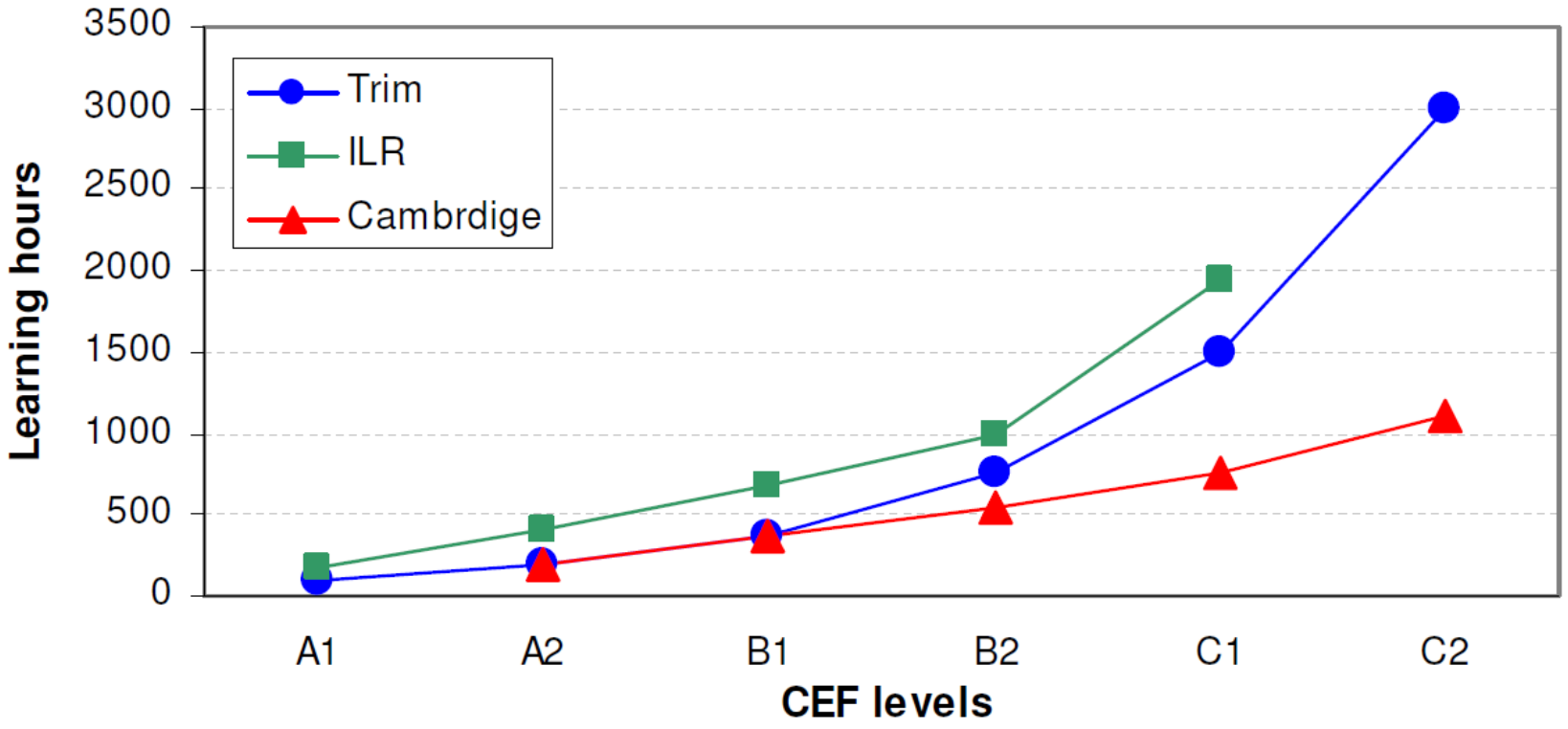



Fig. 3. Mean score gains on IELTS Writing component for learners on EAP courses.


3500
3000
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
Learning hours
Trim
ILR
Cambrdige
A1
A2
B1
B2
C1
C2
CEF levels

(de Jong, 2009)

# Proficiency or Achievement

IELTS/TOEFL/PTE are language proficiency tests, and…

research by Green (2005) shows that students on EAP courses do not demonstrate much gain on IELTS writing scores. Tonkyn (2012) provides similar results for speaking, albeit with a small sample size.

Should we surmise that students on EAP programmes are not learning anything or recognise that proficiency tests are not capturing the learning that does occur?

# Proficiency or Achievement

Pre-university EAP courses follow syllabi with specific aims and objectives, and…

they focus primarily on academic skills and academic literacy development (e.g. writing an academic essay; giving an oral presentation; participating in a seminar; finding/selecting/using appropriate source material for essay or presentations) rather than developing proficiency in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and…

EAP programmes regularly use coursework assessments that require students to demonstrate that they attained the course objectives.

Isn't this achievement testing?

# Proficiency or Achievement

Since proficiency tests (e.g. IELTS/TOEFL) are not able to tell us about students' ability to meet the British HE academic requirements of their discipline (e.g. writing up a case study for an MSc in Management) and…

Since tracking studies indicate that the performance on degree coursework of students who successfully complete short pre-university EAP courses is on par with that of direct entry students, then…

Aren't the two types of assessments telling us different things?

# Proficiency or Achievement

If proficiency tests tell us that students have sufficient English to benefit from instruction (but may need additional support adapting to the academic requirements of UK HE delivery modes and assignment requirements) and…

If local EAP achievement-based assessment tells us that students with lower than direct-entry level English proficiency can learn through the medium of English and manage UK HE delivery methods and assignment requirements (the degree to which they can do this should be noted), then

Should the outcomes of local assessments be reported using the same performance level descriptors as IELTS? Or should they be reported using descriptors that relate to the local course aims and objectives?

# Authenticity at the expense of reliability?

- Use of live lectures
- Different topics f t disciplines
- Selection of re
- Choice of writ

# How generalizable are the results from our students' performances?

Test type: A "take home" coursework essay which students work on for around 10 weeks.

Length: 1,000 words (+/- 10%) excluding references.

Title: Four possible titles, assigned to students according to their prospective degree.

Other input: A reading list is provided, and students are encouraged to mainly use this list for their sources. The student's EAP tutor gives formative feedback on drafts of the essay.

Skills assessed: Skills emphasised by the course include critical evaluation of a theory, synthesis of a range of sources, and general rhetorical and ideational organisation.

# Key Questions

# Thank you for your attention!

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# References

de Jong, J. (2009). Unwarranted claims about CEF alignment of some international English language tests. http://www.ealta.eu.org/conference/2009/docs/friday/John_deJong.pdf

Green, A.B (2005). EAP study recommendations and score gains on the IELTS Academic Writing test, *Assessing Writing*, *10*(1), 44-60

O'Sullivan, B. (2011). Language Testing. In James Simpson (ed). *Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Oxford: Routledge.