Programme for the ALTE online course
Assessing Writing in the Digital Age
6th September – 10th September 2021

Course presenters:
Dr Sathena Chan, University of Bedfordshire
Dr Jing Xu, Cambridge Assessment English

Virtual platform used: Microsoft Teams
This course introduces core principles guiding the assessment of writing in a digital learning environment. It relates theoretical issues to both the language classroom and large-scale institutional, national and international assessments. The course provides the essential foundations for writing assessment practice and for further study in this field.

Participants will learn:

- principles that inform the decisions that individuals and organisations responsible for developing writing assessment systems have to make about test design, test content, and the implementation and use of the test;
- practical steps to develop a digital/computer-delivered writing test including test specification, task design, item writing, and rating scale development;
- the use of process-tracking technologies and automated scoring tools to gather evidence about learners' writing proficiency and to provide effective learning-oriented feedback;
- examples of technological advancement in writing assessment systems and ethical considerations.

Throughout the course, participants will work in small groups to experience the cycle of developing and validating writing assessments with a range of technological resources. They will have opportunities to share their work and receive feedback from peers and the facilitators. By the end of the course, participants will have developed an understanding of the main principles behind the assessment of writing and will have a raised awareness of different technologies and how they affect diverse aspects of writing test design and validation. Participants are expected to have a professional interest in language testing in general and the assessment of writing in particular, though they are not expected to have a profound knowledge of the subject area.

Practical information

Each registered participant will be invited to join a Microsoft Teams group where all the lectures, group activities, and discussions between participants and facilitators will take place.

The course is structured in 5 days and each day will have the following elements:
- Questions or points to consider, before you begin any tasks or reading
- 2 lectures and further reading
- 2 group tasks
- Feedback from facilitators
- A discussion forum

Day 1: Overview of writing assessment and test construct		
Lecture	9:30-10:15	Types of writing assessment and their use
Group activities	10:45-12:00	Trying different digital/computer-delivered writing tests
Lecture	13:00-13:45	Socio-cognitive framework (SCF) of test development and validation
Group activities	14:15-15:15	Reviewing writing tests using SCF
Discussion forum		Brainstorming a new writing test to suit your needs
Day 2: Test design and item writing		
Lecture	9:30-10:15	From models of writing to test design
Group activities	10:45-12:00	Producing a test specification
Lecture	13:00-13:45	Item writing and item writer training
Group activities	14:15-15:15	Designing and pretesting a prototype task
Discussion forum		Trying out prototype tasks
Day 3: Evaluation of writing performance		
Lecture	9:30-10:15	Scoring validity and methods of judging writing performance
Group activities	10:45-12:00	Developing a rating scale and writing descriptors
Lecture	13:00-13:45	Rater training and rater reliability
Group activities	14:15-15:15	Trailing a rating scale and estimating rater reliability
Discussion forum		Reflection on rating experience
Day 4: Validating and improving writing tests		
Lecture	9:30-10:15	Setting pass marks and communicating results to test users
Group activities	10:45-12:00	Generating score reports
Lecture	13:00-13:45	Different methods for collecting validity evidence
Group activities	14:15-15:15	Evaluating writing tests
Discussion forum		Improving writing tests
Day 5: Learning-oriented feedback		
Lecture	9:30-10:15	Giving feedback on writing performance
Group activities	10:45-12:00	Providing individualised feedback
Lecture	13:00-13:45	Introduction of 'Write & Improve' (An automated writing practice/assessment tool empowered by machine learning technology)
Summary	14:15-15:15	Concluding remarks and Q&A
Discussion forum		Trying out 'Write & Improve'

Course presenters

Dr Sathena Chan
Sathena is a Senior Lecturer in Language Assessment at the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire. She holds a PhD in Language Testing. She has conducted over 20 externally funded projects for major English language testing providers in the UK and worldwide. Her recent publications include *Defining Integrated Reading-into-Writing Constructs: Evidence at the B2-C1 Interface* (2018, English Profile Studies volume 8, Cambridge Assessment English/Cambridge University Press); *Research and Practice in Assessing Academic Reading: The Case of IELTS* (with Cyril J Weir, 2019, Studies in Language Testing volume 51, Cambridge Assessment English/Cambridge University Press); and a forthcoming chapter in *Language Test Validation in A Digital Age* (Studies in Language Testing volume 52, Cambridge Assessment English/Cambridge University Press). Her work can also be seen in peer-reviewed journals including *Assessing Writing, System* and *Language Testing in Asia.* She was the guest editor of a special issue of *Assessing Writing* on the comparability of paper-based and computer-based writing assessments in 2017. She regularly delivers workshops, webinars, and courses on a range of topics in language testing for universities and professional bodies such as European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA). She currently serves as the Convenor of the Testing, Evaluation and Assessment SIG in the British Association for Applied Linguistics.

Dr Jing Xu
Jing is a Principal Research Manager at Cambridge Assessment English, which he joined in 2015. He began his career as an English language teacher and before moving to the UK worked as the Program Assistant for the Oral English Certification Test at Iowa State University (USA) and a research intern at Educational Testing Service (USA). He obtained his PhD in Applied Linguistics and Technology from Iowa State University and his research focuses on technology-enhanced language assessment and learning. He has published research widely in refereed journals including *Language Testing*, *Language Assessment Quarterly* and *CALICO*, as well as in many edited volumes. He is a recipient of the Jacqueline Ross TOEFL Dissertation Award and a co-recipient of the Best Article Award presented by the International Language Testing Association (ILTA). Jing currently serves as an Editorial Advisory Board member for *Language Assessment Quarterly.*