

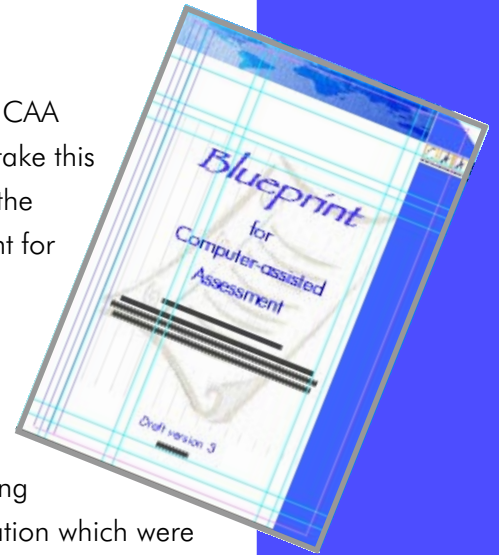
Testing Times

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Introducing

Welcome to the third issue of the CAA Centre Newsletter. We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce you to the 'Blueprint for CAA'. The Blueprint for CAA is a comprehensive document which addresses the broad range of issues which need to be tackled by all staff involved in implementing CAA.



Originally the Blueprint evolved as a supporting document for the three models of implementation which were being developed by consortium members. The models draw on particular areas of expertise and detail the implementation of

- web-based
- optically-based and
- PC-based CAA systems.

During the development process it became clear that what was needed was a more extensive and comprehensive document which provided all staff who may be engaged in some form of CAA activity with a well-grounded point of reference. The potential breadth of staff involved has meant that the documentation had to be carefully structured to allow different groups to access relevant sections without overlooking related issues.

The models for implementing CAA have become structured pathways which summarise and cross-reference all sections of the document. This helps to provide both an over-arching perspective as well as a detailed methodology which can be easily followed.

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At all times we have tried to address the key issues surrounding the use of CAA in higher education from the perspective of encouraging *appropriate* adoption, as one of a range of assessment methods. Within the Blueprint there is discussion of the pedagogical issues associated with objective testing and the structuring of tests and questions within the context of wider assessment strategies. Comprehensive practical advice concerning the construction of tests and questions is offered with examples of basic and complex question types framed within the

As always, if you have any comments or information for further newsletters, please contact us at info@caacentre.ac.uk.

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Blueprint

context of Bloom's taxonomy. Techniques for scoring tests and making effective use of statistics, such as facility and discrimination and how these can be fed back into curriculum design are also discussed.

An overview of the range of technologies available with which to deliver CAA is given. There is no attempt to recommend particular technical solutions, rather to highlight the potential benefits and limitations of each.

There is also a brief exploration of related activities, such as computer-mediated communication, which provide the opportunity to broaden the scope and potential of CAA to effectively assess student learning.

Other chapters discuss in detail the operational and technical issues associated with delivering CAA, particularly in a summative context. The appendices contain examples, schedules and instructions for CAA examinations and workshops. The need for effective staff development for all staff (academic and support) is highlighted as is the need to provide clear and adequate student support.

Final chapters provide an overview of methods of evaluating CAA and discuss quality assurance issues and considers ways of implementing CAA on a strategic level and managing change within an institution.

The Blueprint for CAA is currently being piloted in consortium member institutions where it is being used to support the implementation of CAA in a range of different disciplines.

The Blueprint will undergo a further revision in the summer 2001 following feedback from the pilots. However, due to demand, the Blueprint will be available to the higher education sector in its third draft format from January 2001. We are seeking evaluative comments from those using the Blueprint and will provide an updated final version to all those who purchase the draft version.

(Prices include packing and postage)

UK HE/FE institutions -	£25.00	per copy
Non UK institutions -	£35.00	per copy
Non- education -	£45.00	per copy

Announcing

Call For Papers

2ND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON TECHNOLOGY IN
TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION
JUNE 27-29, 2001
SAMOS ISLAND, GREECE



The Conference Planning Committee is interested in receiving presentation proposals that address the role and function of various technologies in the teaching and learning process. The technologies to be covered by the themes of this international conference are, but not limited to, compressed audio/video, internet, networks, satellite, other interactive delivery systems.

For more details: <http://www2.nl.edu/~cspi/>

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The icing on the cake

The CAA Centre's Open Day in early October attracted around 50 people who tried out a range of testing software and met members of the consortium.

Tim Boatswain, the University of Luton's Pro Vice Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, launched the Open Day by cutting a large sponge cake decorated with the CAA Centre and the new University logos.

Poster displays from a recent University Teaching and Learning Conference and CAA staff development materials and publications were available. An on-line quiz using Perception software proved popular with attendees – not least because of the chance of winning a book token by



Tim Boatswain leaves slice of cake

demonstrating their general – and not so general – knowledge. For example, how many of you know that the collective noun for geese is a skein?

The Opening celebrated the move of the Centre to its new premises, as well as the establishment of the new Department of Teaching and Learning Research, within which the Centre is based.

The event proved a good opportunity for raising the profile of the Centre within the University and succeeded in bringing in people who were unaware of the Centre's existence or who had never been to the Centre before.

Web pages about the Open Day can be found at www.caacentre.ac.uk/penday.

Welcoming



NEW KID IN TOWN

Andy Russell, Senior Administrator, Joins the CAA Centre. Andy has experience of administration in education-related organisations. He has worked in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Luton, and in the training department of the London Borough of Brent. He has also been a teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages.

Farewell

Colleen McKenna, Project Officer, Has recently left the CAA Centre to join University College London to work with the Higher Education Research and Development Unit.

We will miss Colleen's invaluable work with the CAA Centre but we all wish her good luck in her latest role in educational research.



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DESIGNING AND USING OBJECTIVE TESTS

A one-day workshop from ALT

DATE: 17 January 2001

VENUE: University of Luton

TIME: 1000-1630

COST: stlg 70 (ALT members),

stlg 120 (non-members)

OVERVIEW

Objective tests are increasingly being used to assess student learning in higher education. Effective objective tests are challenging to design and their potential benefits can often be underestimated.

This workshop will provide a practical introduction to designing effective objective test items and consider a range of issues which need to be considered in integrating objective tests into assessment strategies.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED

The morning session will provide an overview of the current use of objective tests and discuss the range of approaches which can be adopted to make effective use of objective tests. It will introduce participants to a variety of question types dispelling the myth that it's all multiple-choice questions!

The afternoon session will include discussion and hands-on experience of writing, improving and revising test items. It will address issues such as scoring, feedback, statistical analysis and the integration of objective tests into existing assessment methods and strategies.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

By the end of the workshop, participants will have:

- * An understanding of the benefits and limitations of objective tests

- * An overview of the range of question types
- * An appreciation of the issues surrounding scoring, feedback to students and statistical analysis
- * Good practice documentation

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

The workshop is aimed at lecturers who may be currently using or considering using objective tests to assess their students. It will also appeal to support and staff/educational development staff who may be involved in guiding and advising academic staff on assessment practices.

ABOUT THE PRESENTER

Joanna Bull is Head of Teaching and Learning Research at the University of Luton and Project Manager for the Computer-Assisted Assessment (CAA) Centre. The Centre is a focal point for expertise, advice and guidance on CAA in higher education. Her most recent publications include articles and books on the assessment of student learning and strategies for implementing computer-assisted assessment. She has run numerous workshops and presented at conferences in the fields of assessment and learning technology.

Please contact ALT for a booking form. Deadline for booking forms 10 January 2001. Contact either:

<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/alt-E/Workshops/index.html>

or Association for Learning Technology Oxford Brookes University, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP, UK

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LITERATURE AWARENESS

This is a selection of literature that has recently appeared on web-sites or in journals.

International Journal of Electrical Engineering Education, January 2000, Vol 37 No 1

Articles written for those working in education in engineering include the following that may be of more general interest.

'Developments in on-line assessment: experiences and evaluation of using TRIADS, and its potential for assessment in electrical engineering' (AP Boyle, DJ Edwards, DM Mackenzie, B Mills, D O'Hare, EC Morris, CRC Paul, H Wilkins and DW Williams).

This article gives an introduction to the TRIADS project which produces a range of multi-media computer delivered assessments through the use of question templates and proforma. The Triads system and components are explained in the article, including details of the assessment engine, assessment configuration shell, question sequencer, tutorial shell and question templates. There is a section on integrating TRIADS into a study program and examples of question types designed for electrical engineering.

'Specifications and standards for learning technologies: The IMS project' (B Olivier, O Liber and P Lefrere).

This article outlines the work of the Instructional Management System (IMS) project, which is developing a set of specifications for designing an integrated learning system suitable for the Internet. The idea is to enable information to be exchanged between various software components, so that content can be published for distributed learning, using multiple-systems,

globally. The article describes the specifications, standards, mandates, and initiatives required to make it possible. Essentially, the article tackles the technical issues concerning metadata, content, interoperability, profiles, collaboration and messaging, enterprise and e-commerce. Pedagogic relationships between academics and management and the control of technology are mentioned in brief.

Language Testing, Vol.17, No 4, 2000

'Sequencing as an item type' (J Charles Alderson, R Percsich, G Szabo).

An interesting article primarily designed for use in language testing, but may be of interest to those involved in CAA activity. The paper seeks to measure reading proficiency and it gives a good account of calibrating test item responses using item response theory (Rasch model, Big Steps Version 2.30 and Wright Linacre, 1992). It discusses the use of Microsoft Excel to match candidates' response data to the correct sequence of text (answer) and to generate statistics for scoring purposes.

Educational Testing Service, <http://www.ets.org>

Latest additions (2000) to the ETS web-site include two important articles on the recent developments to *E-rater*, the essay scoring application developed by ETS.

Benefits of modularity in an automated scoring system (Burstein, J and D Marcu).

This article describes the latest theoretical developments and test experiments involving the *E-rater*. The new feature is designed to enrich *E-raters* feature sets. It now has a modular architecture, which includes the integration of rhetorical parse trees and discourse-based essay summaries. There are three discrete modules, which identify various linguistic features in the essay responses and from this data is generated and stored in the form of a vector analysis. The modules comprise a syntactic module, discourse

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module and topical analysis feature module, which contribute to the assessment of the text quality. ETS see two main advantages in developing the existing *E-rater* in this way. One is to strengthen the connections between human and machine scoring and the other to adapt the *E-rater* to provide explanatory feedback about writing quality. From this, test-takers can determine whether their rhetorical structure makes the important points of their essay topic salient in the text.

'Towards Using Text Summarization for Essay-Based Feedback' (Burstein, J and D Marcu).

This article outlines developments on the *E-rater* in conjunction with the work above. It details the further development of a web-based essay evaluation, *Criterion* and is primarily concerned with generating instructional feedback. Topic-related feedback can incorporate a synthesis across multiple essays. It is hypothesized that summaries can be used in the context of instructional feedback

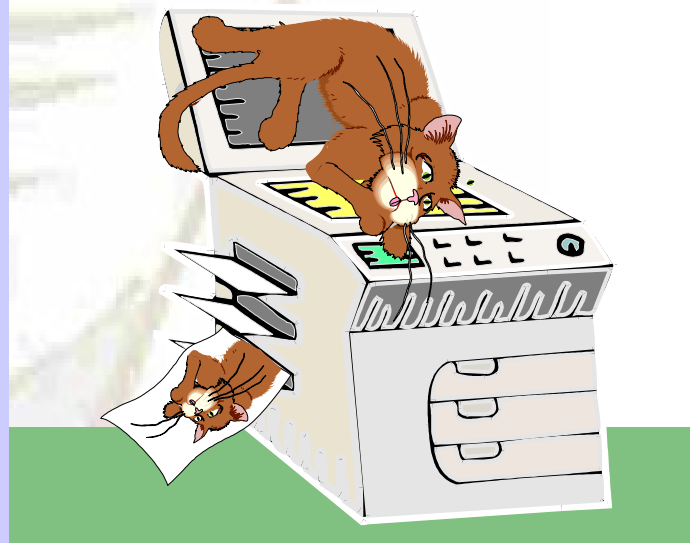
to determine the most important points of essays. In the paper ETS take the first step toward evaluating the usability of automatically generated summaries for an application that automatically provides instructional feedback.

DfEE <http://safety.ngfl.gov.uk>

The DfEE have published an online pack called, Superhighway Safety, which can be downloaded free of charge. It is targeted at teachers and gives information on copyright, electronic copying and plagiarism. It provides information about 'essay bank' web-sites and mentions that a UK-based web-site is to go live in Autumn 2000, which offers students money for their essays and lecture notes. It also has information on topics ranging from internet filtering systems, firewalls, walled gardens to issues concerning teaching and the internet and in setting up your own web-site.

The CAA Centre technical review of plagiarism detection software

The CAA Centre and the Information Services Directorate at the University of Luton, have been awarded funding by JISC to undertake a technical review of plagiarism detection software and services. A performance comparison of some of the tools and services, including comparison of cost, time and effort required to detect plagiarism by electronic means and acts of plagiarism identified using traditional methods will result in a 'Which' style report.



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