



OXFORD UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

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# **OUCEA**

## **ANNUAL REPORT**

### **2010-11**



## Foreword

The Oxford University Centre for Educational Assessment opened its doors three years ago. Two of the most highly respected educational names in the world set out to establish the Centre as a focal point for research collaboration in the understanding of educational attainment and to provide a forum for international academic discussion.

This past year, we have been indebted to Professor Richard Daugherty who took over as Director following the retirement of Professor Gordon Stanley our first Director. Richard has continued to build the Centre's international research base and to develop its role in examining the relationship between educational assessment and public policy goals at a time when issues of comparative educational assessment are ever more important in a global economy where education is the key to competitiveness and success.

The Centre is delighted to welcome, as permanent Director from October 2011, Professor Jo-Anne Baird who joins from the University of Bristol.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Gardam." The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first few letters.

Tim Gardam

Chair, Advisory Board

## Director's Report

I have been grateful for the opportunity to contribute, building on the excellent foundations laid by Professor Gordon Stanley, to the development of what is already becoming established as an important centre for research into educational assessment.

A major focus for the Centre is to conduct research into the role of assessment in developing, implementing and monitoring system-level change. That part of our remit calls for the Centre to engage with proposals for system change by ensuring that policy-makers in the UK and elsewhere are aware of relevant insights from research. My response to the invitation to give evidence to a review of national tests for 11 year-olds in England is one example of the Centre fulfilling that part of its remit.

It has been especially pleasing for me to oversee the strengthening of the Centre's staffing during this academic year. The incoming Director, Professor Jo-Anne Baird, will be joined in January 2012 by Dr. Therese Hopfenbeck who will take up a new lectureship in educational assessment.

The work of the Centre's full-time academic staff is supported and augmented by research associates whose university base is elsewhere but who contribute to this Centre's activities. Professor Art Graesser from the University of Memphis and Professor Mark Wilson from the University of California at Berkeley have accepted invitations to become Senior Research Fellows. Professor Gordon Stanley will be continuing his association with Oxford as a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre.

The most notable research event to be organised during the year was an international seminar on the role of teacher judgment in large scale systems of summative assessment. The seminar, in June 2011, brought together academics and assessment professionals from seven countries. The Centre has also undertaken research projects such as an investigation into the policy effects of the PISA international tests of student performance that was commissioned by Pearson UK.

The Centre's links with research and assessment activities in Pearson companies in the UK and beyond have been strengthened during the year. I attended the Pearson International Assessment Conference in Austin, Texas in February 2011 and have had several productive meetings with the assessment professionals who work for the UK awarding body, Edexcel.

As is true for any university research centre, our doctoral students are an important part of the Centre's day-to-day life. The work they are doing as individual researchers has been complemented by the establishment in 2011 of a new student assessment research network. The network brings together, and reflects the interests of, not only the Centre's own DPhil students but also draws in from across the University other students with research interests in assessment.

Part of my role has been to ensure that the Centre's activities continue to be well managed. For example, our administrator Jo Hazell has initiated, and seen through to completion, a redesign of the Centre's website. Jo is at the hub of the Centre, dealing with everything that comes her way with characteristic quiet efficiency.

It has been a privilege for me to spend a year working, in the Education Department as well as in the Centre, with such a talented and committed group people.

*Professor Richard Daugherty*

## Research Themes

The following research themes form the focus of activities within the Centre but are currently being reviewed:

- Developing and enhancing theories and models of educational assessment to help better understand different types of learning processes, resource use and outcomes in various educational systems and international contexts.
- Understanding how educational assessment is perceived and utilised by the various stakeholders within different educational systems. How perceptions vary and how they are changing overtime.
- Building a systematic appreciation of how assessment has shaped, or is shaped by, policy and practice in the various educational sectors, subject domains and international contexts.
- Evaluating how different types and modes of assessment influence the effectiveness of learning processes and systems – the relevance and functional impact of different forms of assessment in supporting learning. Factors shaping the uptake of different types of assessment and how assessment might better respond to learning objectives, curriculum design and different qualification regimes.
- Educational Measurement and Informatics and the contribution of enhanced information to validity, reliability and the functionality of assessment systems. The impact and opportunities of information to enhancing formative and summative assessment in different educational settings.
- Notions of validity, reliability and 'standards' in different types of educational assessment and the link between the nature of assessment and standing and reputation of qualifications.
- Impacts and opportunities offered by new assessment technologies in test design, test distribution, administration and results delivery. The impact and opportunities of e-learning and e-assessment in different educational settings.
- How the use and application of psychometrics is changing the face of educational and work-based assessment and its impact on life-long learning and personal development

## People

### Staff



Professor Richard Daugherty, Honorary Professor in the School of Social Sciences at Cardiff University, took over as Director of OUCEA in October 2010 following Professor Gordon Stanley's retirement. Professor Daugherty has been Head of the Education Department at Aberystwyth University and Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Aberystwyth where he is now an Emeritus Professor. From 1992 until 2010 Richard was a member of the Assessment Reform Group, a group that has brought research evidence to bear on assessment policy developments across the UK and has published reports, articles and pamphlets collaboratively.



In October 2011 Professor Jo-Anne Baird will take up her appointment as OUCEA Director and Pearson Professor of Educational Assessment. Professor Baird is currently Director of the University of Bristol's Centre for Assessment and Learning Studies and is Lead Editor of the journal *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. She was previously Head of Research at the English Examination Board, the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance, where she was responsible for managing the research programme and for the standard-setting process. Professor Baird's research interests are on examination standards, marking, structural aspects of assessment and assessment policy. She is a Fellow of the Association of Educational Assessment-Europe. In 2007, Professor Baird co-edited the book, *Techniques for comparing examination standards*, which was commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.



Dr. Therese Hopfenbeck will join OUCEA as Lecturer in Educational Assessment in January 2012. Dr. Hopfenbeck has a PhD in Education from the University of Oslo, where she currently holds a post-doctoral position. At the moment she is based at Oslo University's research group for Measurement and Evaluation of Student Achievement and the Unit for Quantitative Analysis of Education, where she is focusing on large-scale comparative assessments and how international testing has shaped public policy across education systems. Dr. Hopfenbeck's research interests also include educational accountability, test-motivation, and developing models of classroom assessment and self-regulation in secondary comprehensive schools. She is the 2010 recipient of the Association for Educational Assessment-Europe New Researcher Award.

## Research Associates

The following Research Associates work closely with OUCEA and visit the Centre regularly.

- Professor David Andrich of the University of Western Australia (Visiting Professor until May 2012)
- Professor John Gardner of Queen's University, Belfast (Visiting Professor until April 2013)
- Professor Arthur Graesser, University of Memphis (Senior Research Fellow until March 2013)
- Professor Gordon Stanley, Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney (Senior Research Fellow until January 2013)
- Professor Jim Tognolini, Director of Pearson Research and Assessment (Senior Research Fellow until November 2011)
- Professor Mark Wilson of the University of California, Berkeley (Senior Research Fellow until March 2013)

## Students

OUCEA's DPhil students have continued to progress their studies.

- Velda Elliott *Marking Time: the decision making processes of examiners of history and English A level*
- Maria Teresa Florez *Assessment reform in Chile: the relationship between policies and practices*
- Malcolm Hayes *A review of National Curriculum mathematics test equating and the setting of thresholds at key stages 2 and 3*
- Yanhong Li *A study of the phenomenon of grade inflation in UK higher education*
- Manzil Maqsood *Investigating the effect of a diagnostic formative e-assessment software programme on mathematics achievement of Year 5 students in primary schools of Pakistan*

## Student Assessment Network

OUCEA has initiated a student group to develop more activities related to assessment in the Department of Education. The Student Assessment Network is chaired by a student and meets twice a term to discuss issues around educational assessment. The Network is aimed at all students in the Department whose research interests include or overlap with assessment and who may also be members of other research groups. Two meetings are held each term: an informal student-led meeting, where students present and discuss their work; and a more formal meeting, where an outside speaker or an academic member of the Department is invited to present on an aspect of their research. A reading group is being developed and many of the Network's members are also members of the AEA-Europe's Doctoral Network.

## Research Programme

The following events have taken place this year.

### **Pan Pearson Research Conference**

Professor Daugherty participated in a conference in February at the University of Texas at Austin which drew together expertise from Pearson companies across the US and from elsewhere in the world. The main conference themes were:

- International Assessment Collaboration
- New Approaches to Assessment
- Technology to Improve Assessment and Learning

### **OUCEA Teacher Judgment Seminar**

In June, OUCEA held an invited seminar on the use of teachers' judgments within systems of summative assessment. Papers presented at the seminar reported on research findings from the US, Australia, England, Scotland and Wales and referred to experience in vocational education and higher education as well as to the schools sector. The seminar focused on what can be learned about the effectiveness of strategies for ensuring consistency in the measurement of student attainments in large-scale systems that rely on teacher judgment. Seminar papers are available on the OUCEA website <http://oucea.education.ox.ac.uk/>.

### **Pearson Research Management Planning Committee**

The Pearson Research Management Planning Committee Meeting was held in June, hosted by OUCEA.

### **Pearson Assessment Community**

OUCEA hosted a Pearson Assessment Community Meeting in June.

## Projects

The Centre was commissioned by Pearson UK to undertake a pilot project investigating the policy response in six countries to the results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The report of the project refers to: France, Canada, Norway, England, Switzerland and Shanghai (China).

## Visitors

OUCEA has welcomed a number of visitors this year and we continue to work closely with them, consolidating links and developing our research profile.

October 2010 – Professor Jim Tognolini (Pearson Research and Assessment)

November 2010 – Professor Gordon Stobart (University of London Institute of Education)

January 2011 – Professor John Gardner (Queen’s University, Belfast), Mark Anderson (Pearson)

March 2011 – Professor Jim Tognolini, Professor David Carless (The University of Hong Kong)

May 2011 – Professor Arthur Graesser (University of Memphis), Isabel Sutcliffe (Edexcel)

June 2011 – Professor Jim Tognolini, Professor Gordon Stanley (former OUCEA Director), Professor John Gardner

August 2011 – Henriette Lundgren (University of Hamburg)

## Website

As OUCEA continues to grow and embarks on a new era under the directorship of Professor Jo-Anne Baird, we have taken the opportunity to develop our online presence in support of our research strategy. The new OUCEA web address is <http://oucea.education.ox.ac.uk/>.

## Future plans

### **Research programme for 2011-12**

At the time of writing the incoming Director, Professor Baird, is preparing the Centre’s research programme for the next academic year.

### **Seminar series on Public Understanding of Assessment**

On the initiative of Professor John Gardner, Visiting Professor at OUCEA, there will be series of seminars at which guest speakers will address aspects of public perceptions of assessment. This will be followed by a special issue of the *Oxford Review of Education* on the same theme in 2013.

### **Research studentships**

To assist with recruitment of a new cohort of DPhil students at the Centre studentships will be offered to support students embarking on their degrees in October 2012.



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