

A dilemma

While claims of equivalence between tests with very different qualities are at best approximations, making these links is a political and bureaucratic necessity, given that many jurisdictions accept scores from multiple sources as meeting their entrance requirements and failure to specify such links may result in particular tests being excluded from consideration. The tension between professionalism and pragmatism is particularly acute when commercial interests are at stake.

Elder, C. (2017). Language assessment in higher education. In E. Shohamy, I. G. Or, & S. May (Eds.), *Language testing and assessment*, Encyclopedia of language and education (3rd ed., pp. 271-286). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

We need to understand ...

WHAT

Purpose

Proficiency level(s)

Construct

Tasks, content, assessment criteria

Method of score reporting

Overall quality

Original context of test



Proposed context of test

HOW MUCH

Acceptable level of performance
(cut-score)

→ **Standard-setting**

for local institution, faculty,
department, course/programme;
for level of study (UG, PG)

HOW

Improved stakeholder literacy in
language testing

The goal

It would seem that the key to more valid and useful English assessment in higher education lies in effective long-term institutional policy-making which puts language tests in their rightful place as part of an integrated teaching and learning program ...

Effective policy-making ... must stipulate not only the mechanism for ensuring adequate proficiency at entry but also the means of identifying learning needs and monitoring language development throughout students' courses and on graduation.

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English language tests for university admission

- Is a large-scale commercial test by definition more suitable than a well-maintained and well-understood institution-specific test?
- Is being linked to (e.g.) the CEFR sufficient to make a test suitable?
- To what extent is any test equivalent to another test?

What about the suitability of:

- National school-leaving exams in English (as a foreign/additional language)?
- SAT (standardized test used for US university admissions; writing, critical reading, mathematics; delivered in English)?