Victoria

UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Te Whare Wānanga
o te Ūpoko o te Ika a Māui

School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies
Course Outline

LALS 524: Language Testing, Trimester 3, 2008

1. Course Coordinator:

Peter Gu   Office: von Zedlitz Building, Room VZ214
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                           Victoria University of Wellington
                           PO Box 600
                           Wellington 6140
                           NEW ZEALAND

2. Staff: Peter Gu

3. Class times and rooms: Wednesday 4-6 pm, 24 Kelburn Parade, Room 103

The class meets on the following ten dates:

November 19, 26, December 3, 10, 17 [Break], January 7, 14, 21, 28, and February 4.

For distance students, the course is available at http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz. When you enrol you will automatically be given a computer user account, which will be on your *Confirmation of Study* form. Usually, it is the first six letters of your family name and four letters of your first name. So if your name is Robert Cameron, your user name might be *camerorobe*. Your password will be your student ID number. You need to use this computer user account when you access journals from off-campus. For help, contact scs-hda@vuw.ac.nz or phone (04) 463 5050. If you want to use other student computing services, you need to call the SCS Help Desk on (04) 463 5050. Staff will re-confirm your username and re-set your password after confirming your identity. Useful websites include http://www.vuw.ac.nz/scs/services/services.aspx and http://www.vuw.ac.nz/scs/. If you are an international student the following site could be useful for you http://www.victoria.ac.nz/international/ .

Before you log into Blackboard or make any use of your Victoria University programs, you will need to change your original password. Please visit here https://password.student.vuw.ac.nz/psynch/nph-psf.exe?lang=en-us. Please login with your username and your student ID (your student number) as the initial password to change it. You can also find the link to change your password in the top of the box on the left on the Blackboard login page.

Your userID is printed in the top right section of your Confirmation of Study form that the university sends you. It typically is the first six letters of your family name followed by the first four letters of your first name. If your name results in a userid that is the same as someone else's, there will be a

number added to the end of your username. Look on your Confirmation of Study form to check your username.

Distance students are welcome to come to the class if they are in Wellington. Contact Peter Gu for details.

Online enrolment is now available for students wanting to study at Victoria University in 2009. The website is http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/enrol/

4. Announcements: MA notice board Level 2 Von Zedlitz

Some additional information relevant to this course can be found in the School MA Handbook for 2008. The handbook is available on the web.
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/lals/degrees/docs/MA%20Handbook%202008.pdf

5. LALS main office: VZ 210, 2nd floor Von Zedlitz Building, Kelburn Parade

6. LALS 524 Course Administrator: Rachel Scholes, Postgraduate administration
Tel: 463 5600/463 5255/472 1000 ext 8386
Web contact: www.blackboard.vuw.ac.nz

7. Aims: The general aim is to undertake a survey of current concepts, procedures and issues in language testing, with the primary focus on the use of tests and examinations to assess the achievement or proficiency of second language learners.

8. Objectives: By the end of the course, course members should be able to

1) understand various approaches to assessment and the qualities of a good language test.
2) be familiar with a range of testing procedures and be able to critically evaluate them.
3) know what is involved in designing and developing a test for a particular purpose
4) demonstrate an ability to carry out certain aspects of the test development process, including some basic statistical analysis.

9. Content: The following topics will be covered in the course. The reading for each topic is indicated under the topic. The full references can be found in the table of contents of the set readings.

1	19 November	What is a language test? McNamara, Chap 1, plus Text 1 (pp. 87-88) Readings: Brown & Hudson
2	26 November	Communication and the design of language tests McNamara, Chap 2, plus Texts 2-5 (pp. 89-94) Readings: Fulcher; Bachman
3	3 December	The testing cycle McNamara, Chap 3, plus Texts 6-7 (pp. 95-98) Readings: Bachman & Palmer; McDowell
4	10 December	Validation McNamara, Chap 6, plus Texts 12-13 (pp. 104-106) Readings: Messick; Wall, Clapham & Alderson
5	17 December	The rating process McNamara, Chap 4, plus Texts 8-11 (pp. 98-104)

Readings: A. Brown; Weigle

6	7 January	Measurement McNamara, Chap 6, plus Texts 14-15 (pp. 106-110) Readings: Alderson, Clapham & Wall
7	14 January	The social character of language tests McNamara, Chap 7, plus Texts 16-19 (pp. 110-116) Readings: Shohamy
8	21 January	New directions and dilemmas McNamara, Chap 8, plus Text 20 (pp. 116-119) Readings: Johnson & Brine; Stansfield
9	28 January	The design of test tasks Readings: Read; Weir; Foot; Saville & Hargreaves; Kroll & Reid
10	4 February	Language testing and language teaching Reading: Cheng & Curtis; Wall; Hayes & Read

10. Texts: There are two required texts.

The set text is McNamara, T. (2000). *Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The set readings *LALS 524 Set Readings* are available at approximately $18.10 from the Student Notes Distribution Centre.

11. Assessment: This course will be examined by in-term assessment only. The final grade will be awarded based on marks for the following two assignments and one task.

Assignment 1, due Fri 12 December	30%	(1500 words)	Course objective 1, 2
Task, due Wed 14 January	20%	(500 words)	Course objective 4
Assignment 2, due Wed 4 February	50%	(2500 words)	Course objectives 3, 4

Tasks and assignments can be submitted as e-mail attachments. Please submit each one as a single document in either WORD or WordPerfect format, and e-mail them to LALS-524@vuw.ac.nz. If you send them by post, please include **two** copies of each assignment/task. One will be returned to you with comments on it. The other will be retained for external examining. The postal address is on page 1 of this outline. You can also hand them in through the Assignments slot by the door to the School Office (VZ 210).The assignment topics and tasks are described in this course outline.

N.B. Note that if no work is submitted for assessment before the last three weeks of teaching, there will be nothing on which to base an aegrotat consideration.

Assignment 1 (1500 words) (due Friday 12 December)

Write a *concise* review of an existing test. The review should include an analytical description of the test and an evaluation of how good it is for its intended purpose. It should be a test that you can obtain adequate information about, from sources such as a test manual, user handbook, research report, your own involvement in the testing programme and/or an interview with someone else with direct involvement. (It is not sufficient to base the review simply on a sample test paper.) The main options to choose from are:

- a major international proficiency test, such as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, MELAB or one of the Cambridge Main Suite Exams (FCE, CAE, CPE, etc)

- a published test such as the Oxford Placement Test or the Quick Placement Test
- a test administered on a reasonably large scale by a university, school or other institution (not one for a particular class or course).

If you choose one of the large-scale tests, you should focus on just one component, eg IELTS Reading, the TOEFL writing test, FCE listening.

Here are some points to include (don't try to cover all of them – be selective):

Background Information
        The purpose of the test (for what kinds of decisions?)
        The educational and/or social context

Test Design and Procedures
        The content and format of each part of the test
                (types of text, items, tasks)
        The scoring or rating procedures
        The adequacy of the information about the test available to teachers and learners

The Quality of the Test
        Validity
                The suitability of the test for its intended purpose(s)
                The relevance of the test to language teaching objectives
        Reliability
                What evidence there is that the test produces consistent, dependable results
                (if subjective judgements are involved, how well trained are the raters/markers?)
        Practicality
                Whether the test can be administered and scored adequately, given the resources available

- Do not just describe the test; add as many analytical and evaluative comments as you can.

Task (500 words) (due Wednesday 14 January)

Administer a language test to a group of students and make an analysis of the results, using some of the statistics presented in the chapter by Alderson, Clapham and Wall. Then present the statistical analyses with some interpretive comments about them.
(Note: If you don't have access to a group of learners, contact me in advance and I will provide some test data for your analysis.)

        Guidelines:

- It can be an existing test; you don't have to write one specifically for this purpose.
- It should be a test made up of items marked right or wrong, such as multiple-choice, matching, true-false, or fill-in-the-blank.
- The group of learners can be a single class or a larger grouping.
- The statistics should include mean and standard deviation; a reliability statistic; and item difficulty and discrimination for each of the items.

Assignment 2 (2500 words) (due Wednesday 4 February)

This involves the design and development of a test for a specified purpose, preferably for a population of learners you are working with or are familiar with. If you are able to arrange it, the work for the assignment should include the trialling of at least some of the test material with a suitable group of learners, plus an analysis of the results. Otherwise, I can work out with you some other solutions as a substitute. If you need to work on the second option, you should discuss your topic with me in advance **no later than Friday 18 January**.

12. Penalties: Assignments and tasks must be submitted by the due date. There is no penalty for late submission but permission must be sought and a good reason given. Try to keep within the word limits. Assignments and tasks which are plagiarised will not receive a grade and cannot be resubmitted.

13. Relationship between assessment and course objectives:

The assignments provide an opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of issues involved in language testing, to evaluate a range of testing procedures, and to experience the designing and developing of a language test. The task assesses the practical application of ideas and comprehension of the set texts and set readings.

14. Workload: LALS 524 is a fifteen point one-trimester paper. Course members should expect to spend about 12 hours per week for ten weeks on all the work for this course including lectures.

15. Mandatory Course Requirements (Terms): There are minimum course requirements which must be satisfied to be assessed for the final grade. In order to meet these requirements, course members must

- complete the task,
- attend all the ten classes or participate at least once in each of the ten web-based discussions, and
- complete the 2 assignments.

16. Attendance: On-campus course members must attend all ten lectures. If an absence is unavoidable, then the course member should participate in the Blackboard Discussion Board for that week. Course members studying by distance must make a contribution to each one of the ten Discussion Boards.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under "about Victoria" on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under "Course Outline General Information" at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general

- Student and Staff Conduct

- Academic Grievances

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments

- Student Support