



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**SCHOOL OF LINGUISTICS AND APPLIED LANGUAGE STUDIES**

**MASTER OF ARTS  
LALS 524 LANGUAGE TESTING  
15 POINTS**

**TRIMESTER 3 2014**

### **Important dates**

**Trimester dates:** 17 November 2014 to 22 February 2015

**Teaching dates:** 17 November 2014 to 13 February 2015

**Mid-trimester/Xmas break:** 22 December 2014 to 4 January 2015

**Assignment 1 due:** 19 December 2014

**Assignment 2 due:** 13 February 2015

### **Withdrawal dates**

Refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/withdrawals-refunds). If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination, refer to [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats).

### **Class times and locations**

Thursday 1-3 pm, KP24/201

### **Names and contact details**

#### **Course Coordinator & Lecturer**

Peter Gu      Office:      von Zedlitz Building, Room VZ214  
Phone:      463 5606 (direct line)  
Fax:         463 5604  
E-mail:     [Peter.Gu@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Peter.Gu@vuw.ac.nz)  
Post:        School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies  
Victoria University of Wellington  
PO Box 600  
Wellington 6140  
NEW ZEALAND

#### **Course Administrator**

Janet Attrill      Office:      von Zedlitz Building, Room VZ210  
Phone:      463 5600/463 5894 Fax: 463 5604  
E-mail:     [Janet.Attrill@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:Janet.Attrill@vuw.ac.nz)  
Post:        As above

## Communication of additional information

Additional information about this course and information about any changes will be posted on the course website in Blackboard and announced in on-campus classes.

## Prescription

A study of the design, development and analysis of language tests, especially for the purpose of assessing achievement or proficiency in a second language.

## Course Content

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

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
1	17-22 November	What is a language test?	McNamara, Chap 1, plus Text 1 (pp. 87-88) Readings: Brown & Hudson
2	23-29 November	Communication and the design of language tests	McNamara, Chap 2, plus Texts 2-5 (pp. 89-94) Readings: Fulcher; Bachman
3	1-6 December	The testing cycle and test qualities	McNamara, Chap 3, plus Texts 6-7 (pp. 95-98) Readings: Bachman & Palmer; McDowell
4	7-13 December	Validity and validation	McNamara, Chap 5, plus Texts 12-13 (pp. 104-106) Readings: Messick; Wall, Clapham & Alderson
5	14-19 December	The design of test tasks	Readings: Read; Weir; Foot; Saville & Hargreaves; Kroll & Reid
Mid-trimester/Xmas break: 22 December 2014 to 4 January 2015			
6	5-10 January	Measurement	McNamara, Chap 6, plus Texts 14-15 (pp. 106-110) Readings: Alderson, Clapham & Wall
7	11-17 January	The rating process	McNamara, Chap 4, plus Texts 8-11 (pp. 98-104) Readings: A. Brown; Weigle
8	18-24 January	The social character of language tests	McNamara, Chap 7, plus Texts 16-19 (pp. 110-116) Readings: Shohamy; McNamara

9	25-31 January	New directions and dilemmas	McNamara, Chap 8, plus Text 20 (pp. 116-119) Readings: Canagarajah; Douglas & Hegelheimer
10	1-7 February	Language testing and language teaching	Reading: Cheng & Curtis; Wall; Muñoz & Álvarez

## Course Learning Objectives

Students who pass this course 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.

## Teaching format

The course is delivered in two modes: on-campus and by distance. On-campus classes are run as lectures plus workshops. For distance students, the course is available at <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>. Blackboard is Victoria's online teaching and learning system. In both modes, students are expected to participate actively in activities and discussions.

The on-campus class meets on the following ten dates:

November 20, 27 (online) December 4, 11, 18 [Break], January 8, 15, 22, 29 and February 5.

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

## Mandatory Course Requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

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

## 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.

## Workload

LALS 524 is a fifteen-point one-trimester paper. The expected number of hours to cover this course is 150 over the trimester. Class attendance takes 20 hours. All other course work, e.g., reading and reviewing, doing assignments, takes about 130 hours.

## 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.

Assignment 1	due Friday, 19 December, 23:59	40%	(2000 words)	Course objectives 1, 2
Assignment 2	due Friday, 13 February, 23:59	60%	(3000 words)	Course objectives 3, 4

## 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.

## Marking criteria

A marking sheet with detailed marking criteria will be available on Blackboard. The marking criteria focus on understanding, knowledge (Course objectives 1 and 3) and application (Course objectives 1 and 3) of the knowledge and skills obtained in this course.

## Submission and return of work

All course members should submit your assignments through the Blackboard (BB) system. This means that on-campus students will now need to submit an electronic copy to BB so that your papers are analysed with Turnitin, and a hardcopy either in class or in the drop box outside the School Office. Please submit each assignment (including cover sheet) as a single document in MS WORD format. **DO NOT SUBMIT YOUR ASSIGNMENT IN PDF FORMAT.**

For the on-campus group, your assignments and feedback will be returned to you in class. Or you can collect them at the School Office. Feedback for the distance group will be given through Blackboard or through email. Marked assignments are normally returned to you in two to three weeks.

The assignment topics are described below.

### **Assignment 1** (2000 words) (due Friday 19 December, 2014, 23:59) (40%)

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). On-campus students are encouraged to analyse a past test of the English Proficiency Programme (EPP) at Victoria University of Wellington.

If you choose one of the large-scale tests, you should focus on just one component, e.g., 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.

**Assignment 2** (3000 words) (due Friday 13 February, 2015, 23:59) (60%)

Design your own test. This involves the whole process of test design and validation, i.e., designing, piloting, analysing, and revising a test for a particular purpose, and producing a test report. The purpose of the assignment is to give you first-hand experience in test design and analysis. Your assignment should be a test report documenting the rationale and the process of test design and validation. The test itself should be included as an appendix.

There are two options. Option 1 focuses on a test of your own choice and is mainly for the distance group. Option 2 focuses on a set of weekly vocabulary tests for the EPP

programme at Victoria University of Wellington. This option is mainly for on-campus course members.

### **Option 1: Designing your own test**

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. Useful tests previous course members have designed include, for example, English test for ski coaches, EFL proficiency test for Christian brothers, and a placement test for the EPP programme at Victoria University of Wellington. 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, and suggested revisions based on the analysis.

### **Option 2: Designing a set of vocabulary tests for the EPP programme**

This involves the design and validation of a set of four short vocabulary tests for students at the EPP Programme at Victoria University of Wellington. Currently a short vocabulary test is administered on a weekly basis for achievement and diagnostic purposes. By the time your tests are piloted in the week of 5 January 2015, the following study themes will have been taught: *Learning a language, Endangered species, Earthquakes* and *Tourism*. Your task is to select two themes and design two tests for each theme. Hopefully, the tests you design can be taken online by future students.

Course members on campus are encouraged to work in small groups of three or four, with each group responsible for two themes. As a group, you will work together to design, administer, and analyse your tests. The final assignment you submit, however, should be written up individually. More details about the EPP programme, the students, and the tests will be provided in class.

### **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. No credit will be given for work beyond the word limits. *Assignments which are plagiarised will not receive a grade and cannot be resubmitted.*

### **Set Texts**

1. McNamara, T. (2000). *Language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. *LALS 524 Set Readings*

The readings for LALS 524 are all available on Blackboard, and downloadable in PDF format. Other readings, where necessary, are posted on Blackboard in pdf format.

All textbooks and student notes for the third trimester will be available from Vicbooks: [www.vicbooks.co.nz](http://www.vicbooks.co.nz)

## Class representative

The MA programme has a student representative whose name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

## Student feedback

LALS 524 has been receiving very positive feedback from past students. Changes this year based on previous feedback include extra online materials on Rasch analysis. Student feedback on University courses may be found at [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback\\_display.php](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php).

## Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/integrity-plagiarism)
- Aegrotats: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/exams/aegrotats)
- Academic Progress: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/academic-progress) (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/dates)
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: [www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin)
- Grades: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/study/progress/grades)
- Resolving academic issues: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Special passes: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/dvc-academic/publications)
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/strategy)
- Student support: [www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/students/support)
- Students with disabilities: [www.victoria.ac.nz/st\\_services/disability](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability)
- Student Charter: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/student-charter)
- Student Contract: [www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/study/apply-enrol/terms-conditions/student-contract)
- Subject Librarians: <http://library.victoria.ac.nz/library-v2/find-your-subject-librarian>
- Turnitin: [www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin](http://www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin)
- University structure: [www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/about/governance/structure)
- Victoria graduate profile: [www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/learning-teaching/learning-partnerships/graduate-profile)
- VUWSA: [www.vuwsa.org.nz](http://www.vuwsa.org.nz)