



the e-Assessment Association's

Autumn Newsletter

Issue 03: October 19th, 2009



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Autumn Tidings!

It's clear that autumn has arrived, with leaves littering my garden, squirrels busily storing supplies for winter and the third edition of the e-Assessment Association's newsletter rolling off the presses!

We've had an exciting start to the season with a tremendously successful conference in Scotland and the news that JISC has become the Association's latest corporate member. The collaboration extends to a joint event with JISC CETIS (an advisory service for educational technology and standards) being held at the end of October in Glasgow.

As a member, you've already been subscribed to our new mailing list at aaa@jiscmail.ac.uk and should have received the first of our monthly e-Assessment news updates. If nothing has appeared in your inbox, please let us know at members@e-assessment.com and we'll set things to rights!

You may have noticed a slight change to our logo – this is just one of a number of updates we'll be carrying out over the next few months. Look out for a major overhaul of the eAA's website, where we'll be adding a host of new features to better achieve the aims of the Association.



With the AQA and WJEC moving towards greater utilisation of e-Assessment, we tackle the question of who was first to implement e-Assessment in this way. Feel free to join what promises to be a lively debate on the mailing list!

We also take a look at how a service like Twitter can be adapted for cost-effective use in assessment, find a quiz authoring tool that boasts just under 100 question types to choose from, and examine how you can assess your own assessment methods.

Now if I can just find a way to get the squirrels to clear away the leaves in the garden, my life would be perfect.

Kenji Lamb (Editor)

Have you visited the eAA website?



www.e-assessment.com

Upcoming Events



27th October
*Joint JISC CETIS and
e-Assessment Association
Meeting (Glasgow)*
<http://tinyurl.com/ygcchak>

29th October
*BTL Free seminar:
Functional Skills and
Initial Assessments using
e-Assessment Tools
(London)*
<http://tinyurl.com/y8p42ow>

4th November
*e-Assessment - Making IT
Work (Bradford)*
<http://tinyurl.com/yhdkdfh>

11th-12th November
*e-Assessment in Practice
(Swindon)*
<http://tinyurl.com/ocyc5z>

11th November
*e-Portfolios Now
(East Midlands)*
<http://tinyurl.com/yjt2a83>

11th November
*Assessment Tomorrow
Edinburgh 2009*
<http://tinyurl.com/yec9fve>

17th December
*Computer-adaptive
testing: up to the present,
and possible futures
(Cambridge)*
<http://tinyurl.com/bahv4j>

18th December
*A Word in Your Ear 2009
- Audio Feedback
(Sheffield)*
<http://tinyurl.com/qtaupw>

e-Assessment Association Events

The e-Assessment Association and the JISC CETIS Assessment Special Interest Group are running a 'good practice in e-Assessment' event on the 27th of October at the University of Strathclyde. During the day, three of the presentations will cover recent JISC project publications:

- Review of Advanced e-Assessment Techniques
<http://tinyurl.com/yjecm9b>
- Report on e-Assessment Quality
<http://tinyurl.com/nbsho5>
- Blooming CQF-QMT (Credit Qual. Framework – Question Meta Tags)
<http://tinyurl.com/yln2z4>

The event is free of charge and open to all. For more details and a copy of the full programme, please visit: <http://tinyurl.com/ygcchak>

If your organisation is planning to run an e-Assessment event and you would like to work together with the Association, please contact events@e-assessment.com for more information.

The 25th of September saw the launch of eAssessment Scotland, the largest cross-sector conference of its kind to be held in the country. The Association worked with partner organisations to bring together almost 170 participants to discover how e-Assessment is helping to improve the student experience.

We're already making plans for eAssessment Scotland 2010 – first on the agenda is to source a much larger venue! More details to follow in the next edition of the newsletter...

Cliff Beevers, chair of the Association, announced the winners of the first Scottish e-Assessment Awards at the conference. Follow the links below to view the posters for the winning entries:

Formative e-Assessment (joint winners)

*University of Edinburgh
e-scape Scotland* (<http://tinyurl.com/ya2x32e>)

*Hermitage Academy
Formative e-Assessment in Maths Using SCHOLAR* (<http://tinyurl.com/yckt6hb>)

Summative e-Assessment

*Dundee Medical School
Free-Text-Response Progress Test* (<http://tinyurl.com/yau9q7d>)

e-Portfolio/ePDP

*Dumfries & Galloway College
DGMyspace* (<http://tinyurl.com/yebfir9>)

e-Assessment Administration

*Scottish Water
Using e-Assessment in a Business Context* (<http://tinyurl.com/yc6obes>)

Innovation

*University of Strathclyde Law School & UK Centre for Legal Education
SIMPLE* (<http://tinyurl.com/yaq4v4u>)

Twitter Me This...

Electronic voting systems (handheld devices used to capture student responses) have been around for quite a while now. They've been used to engage learners through formative questions during lectures while providing real-time feedback to teachers. Although many report positive experiences through their use, there are still the normal barriers to overcome: cost, time to develop content and familiarity with the technology.

One approach that's worth taking a look at is to use the increasingly popular Twitter 'micro-blogging' service as a voting tool. Two good (free) examples are **PowerPoint Twitter Tools** (<http://tinyurl.com/yecmh86>) and **TwEVS** (<http://tinyurl.com/lr6a43>).

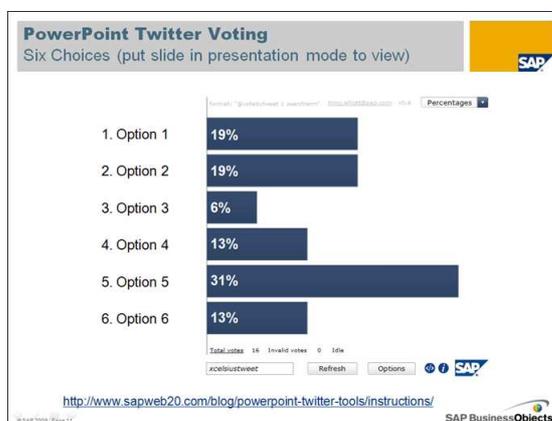
Developed by Timo Elliott, the PowerPoint solution embeds a live Twitter voting system into your slides. Relatively simple to set up, students can 'tweet' their responses to specific questions.

There are additional tools in the form of a tickertape stream, feedback wall (which can display real-time comments/questions) and even a 'clapometer', which measures the ambient volume via an attached microphone.

TwEVS is still in early development, combining Twitter, Yahoo Pipes and Google Docs to produce a real-time voting system. Slightly more complicated to setup than the PowerPoint example, it will be of especial interest to those who enjoy tweaking the technology.

One clear advantage of using these tools is that the activity of voting can now extend beyond the classroom. Users can vote before and after lessons, on any device capable of sending a 'tweet' (something even the most basic mobile phone can do).

For more information on the use of Electronic Voting Systems with students, visit Steve Draper's website: <http://tinyurl.com/ykrtj53>



Seeking Case Studies on Effective Use of e-Assessment

JISC is developing a new publication on e-Assessment, an extension to the previous effective practice document (<http://tinyurl.com/yffjy5p>). If you have an example of successful use in day-to-day teaching and learning, then please contact John Winkley at john.winkley@alphaplusconsultancy.co.uk

Participating would involve being interviewed for a written case study, and possibly being recorded for a video and/or podcast.

Call for Papers

Deadline 13th November
EARLI/Northumbria
Assessment Conference
2010
<http://tinyurl.com/ybxs9hu>

AQA signs 6-year agreement with BTL

BTL Group Ltd. has announced a 6-year partnership agreement with AQA to develop and deliver their e-Assessment programme, TEAL (Technology Enabled Assessment for Learners). BTL will supply AQA with the Surpass suite - a Web 2.0-based, enterprise level e-Assessment solution, providing the tools for AQA to create, manage and deliver their portfolio of qualifications onscreen.



BTL Group Ltd. board

Andrew Bird, Deputy Director General at AQA explained, "We are very pleased to have joined forces with BTL to develop and deliver our TEAL programme. We want to respond to the challenge of providing assessment that is relevant to young people's needs and the changing world we live in. The expertise and vision we share with BTL will help AQA to be the market leader, delivering a range of exceptional products using innovative technology."

Using Games to Assess Creativity

The VC of the University of Gloucestershire, Patricia Broadfoot, has suggested that computer games could play an important role in the assessment of creativity.



"Games are excellent learning tools in that they are interactive and provide rapid feedback, engagement with intellectual complexity, emotional involvement and, increasingly, open-ended outcomes that challenge the creativity of the player."

She criticised current methods of assessment as being not authentic enough or scalable for large deployments. Her comments turned to a shift to e-Assessment on demand.

"The learner will increasingly be in charge of their own learning journey, the teacher increasingly a facilitator, working in partnership with the student to help them build elements of their personal electronic portfolio - a record of achievement that provides a unique and self-managed narrative on each individual's lifelong learning."

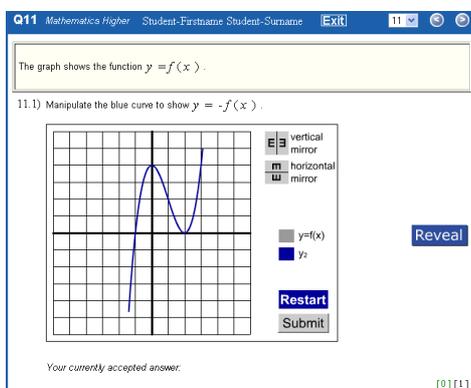
<http://tinyurl.com/yarzb8l>

Which Came First?

Recently at the eAA, we've been considering an age old question 'which came first?' Not in terms of chickens and eggs, but which organisation first enabled students to sit national summative exams online. It's quite a contentious issue, so we've decided to poll the collective knowledge of the membership to see if we can come up with an answer (and once we've solved that one, we can turn to the chickens and eggs).

Our first contender comes courtesy of Cliff Beevers, chair of the Association, who describes a collaboration between Heriot-Watt University and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) in 2003.

"The PASS-IT project aimed to discover if the computer could aid teaching professionals in their task of measuring the minimum competencies of their students at the end of each unit of their courses. The National Assessment Bank (NAB) delivered paper-based tests to assess basic skills in each subject; the challenge for PASS-IT was: could the computer aid teachers by helping to measure basic skills using ICT-delivered tests?"



In November of 2003, during Phase 2 of the project, secondary pupils from two schools in Edinburgh, were given the opportunity of sitting Unit 2 of the SQA's Higher Mathematics National Assessment Bank online instead of on paper. In each school participating in the trial, the whole class took the test online for both formative and summative use. This pilot has led to a steady increased uptake year on year.

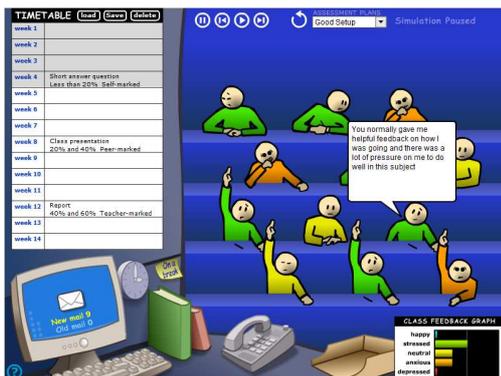
Students studying or taking Higher Mathematics in Scotland can choose the e-Assessment service sponsored by SQA and delivered by the SCHOLAR team at Heriot-Watt University. It was announced on a recent SQA flier entitled "e-Assessment SQA" (FD5232, dated September 2009) that in 2007/8, over 1300 pupils participated in the online mathematics tests which represented 7% of that year's cohort. The up-to-date candidate numbers for 2008/9 indicate that usage has doubled again with almost 15% of Higher Mathematics candidates now opting to use the online service for both formative and summative purposes. For more details, visit the PASS-IT Project website: www.pass-it.org.uk

So, our first claimant to the title is the Scottish Heriot-Watt/SQA collaboration with a date of November, 2003 to beat. Do you know of any earlier examples? If so, please let us know and we'll feature your entry in the next eAA Newsletter!

SimAssessment

SimAssessment, developed by the University of Technology Sydney, is a free innovative online assessment simulator that allows you to test your assessment plans over a 14-week term with a class of 12 virtual students.

The goal is to get as many students as possible to adopt a deep approach to learning. Setting an appropriate balance of course goals, student workload and feedback is all part of the challenge.



The intuitive interface lets you create assessment plans from scratch or choose one of the templates which includes examples of 'good' and 'poor' assessment. The students and a mentor provide you with feedback as you progress through the term.

The depth of choices within the simulation is impressive, catering for a range of assessment types (essay,

MCQ, practicum, portfolio, etc.); different markers (teacher, peers and self); and feedback styles (grades, checklists, verbal or written comments, etc.)

SimAssessment gives an insight into how students' perceptions of assessment might drive their learning. How do your assessment practices measure up?

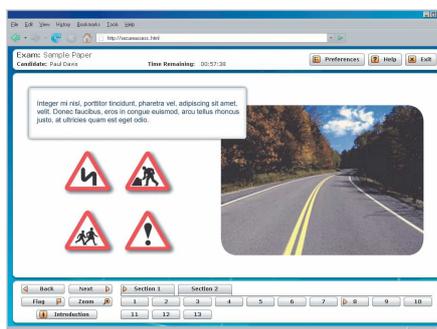
Visit the SimAssessment website at: <http://tinyurl.com/yht7ka4>

WJEC Successfully Deliver On-Screen A-Level Exams Using BTL Surpass

During the summer of 2009, the Cardiff-based awarding body, WJEC, successfully delivered their first on-screen A-Level examinations using BTL's Surpass e-Assessment solution.

GCE Applied ICT and GCE Applied Business were the WJEC qualifications which had units assessed on-screen this summer. The examinations included innovative and engaging content, including video (avatars) and audio.

The e-Assessments were delivered at WJEC examination centres (schools and colleges), through the medium of Welsh and English, via a secure LAN (Local Area Network) connection. One of the key features of the examinations was the combination of computer and human marking, allowing WJEC the flexibility to include both subjective questions, for example, open-ended free-response, and objective ones, for example, multiple choice questions.



Sample Surpass screenshot

Qedoc Quiz Tools

Qedoc is a suite of quiz software tools developed by Image Intelligence Software Ltd.

Users can download the authoring tool and develop assessment resources for free as long as they're willing to share the content in a repository of open educational resources (there's also the option to buy the software if sharing is problematic).



The repository currently contains over 1,100 modules covering a wide range of subjects, everything from ancient languages to astronomy, biology to business and Chinese to chemistry crafts & trades.

Quizzes can be downloaded and run in a locally-installed player, or directly from the web. Support has also been added to allow email submission of results back to teachers.

One outstanding feature of the Qedoc software is the number of question types supported, with **just under 100** different task types at the last count, most of which have additional options to enable even more customisation!

Visit the Qedoc site here: <http://www.qedoc.org>

FREE Membership of the e-Assessment Association

For a limited time, the e-Assessment Association is waiving its annual membership fee of £50.

Take advantage of this unique opportunity and sign up now! Becoming a member of the eAA will enable you to:

- discuss new and creative approaches that can support organisational excellence and help improve the quality of e-Assessment;
- share experiences, practice, skills and knowledge with other experts;
- network with other teachers, tutors, academics, awarding body representatives, training providers, software developers and vendors;
- influence educational policy through debate;
- have access to new developments in e-Assessment;
- look at the latest 'case studies' and 'best practice' exemplars.

To become a member of the eAA today, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/bz6xqv>

If you would like to inquire about corporate membership, please contact: members@e-assessment.com for more information.

Alta Maths for Schools

Alta Maths for Schools is an online, interactive formative assessment system. It is designed for primary and post primary schools (ages 5 to 14), with content specifically designed for Northern Ireland, Scotland and England.

Key features include:

- a huge bank of interactive, multi-instance questions;
- a wide range of response types – not simply MCQs;
- adaptive assessments – next question depends on previous response;
- automated marking and immediate feedback, supported by replay of responses and model answers;
- shared access to diagnostic, formative and summative information.

Alta Maths is an excellent tool for providing precise assessment tasks to illustrate a mathematical concept. The model answer and replay facilities can be used to introduce, demonstrate and illustrate concepts, operations and possible pitfalls.

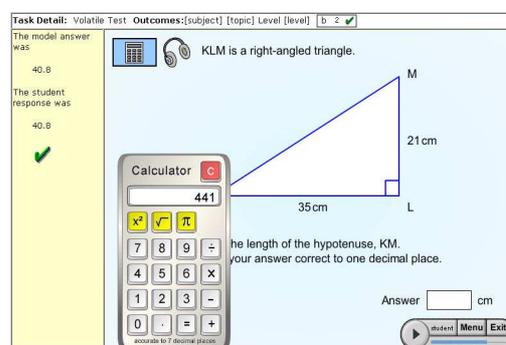


Fig 1: Attempts can be replayed to view processes

Fiona McCann													Well Done						
Summary for Mathematics - Number & Money													Good						
Level	Date Attained	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	Uncertain	
E	—	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	At Risk	
D	7 Nov 2007	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Alert	
C	23 Mar 2006	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
B	16 Dec 2004	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		
A	18 Sep 2003	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■		

Areas of Strength: [View areas for improvement]

- E a ✓ Work with negative numbers (e.g. temperature)
- E c ✓ Work with decimals to 3 places (practical applications in measurement)
- E d ✓ Use relationships between currencies to do simple calculations (e.g. £5 is equal to 47.25 francs)

Fig 2: Example of a summary of achievement screen

Recently, the system has been used with schools in Dundee. The evidence collected there indicates pupils had no difficulty using the system. Alta keeps text to a minimum and provides voiceovers for pupils with reading difficulties. The majority of the pupils commented that they liked working online.

Multi-instance question types ensure a reservoir of fresh questions on the same topic/criterion and at the same level of difficulty enabling learners to practise, apply, confirm and consolidate their learning. All teachers and pupils commented very positively on the practice assessments which focused on particular concepts.

Teachers commented that pupils using Alta became increasingly autonomous in their learning. They were motivated to improve their own learning and began increasingly to take control and set their own realistic targets.

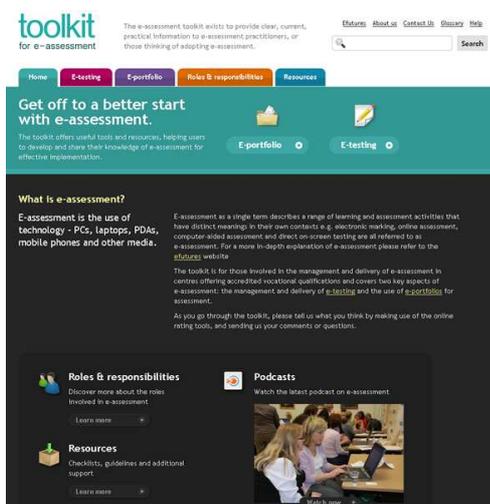
Alta also offers the option to work collaboratively on questions and tasks where they can combine their problem solving skills as they discuss a particular concept. The ability to trial responses and get feedback never fails to promote discussion.

Visit the Maths for Schools site to learn more: www.mathsforschools.com

Ofqual Online e-Assessment Toolkit

Ofqual is the new regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England; they also regulate National Vocational Qualifications in Northern Ireland. Ofqual ensures that children, young people and adult learners get the results their work deserves, that standards are maintained and that the qualifications learners receive count now and in the future.

Their work on e-Assessment reflects this commitment, showing that regulatory arrangements can encourage innovative methods of assessment without creating barriers to development while continuing to be fair by maintaining standards so that public confidence is sustained.



In 2007, the e-Assessment: Guide to effective practice was published (<http://tinyurl.com/y8oy2jp>). It covered two key aspects of e-Assessment; the management and delivery of e-testing and the use of e-Portfolios for assessment. As a result of ongoing consultation with users of the efutures website (www.efutures.org) and other key stakeholders, Ofqual have gone on to develop an online toolkit for e-Assessment.

This toolkit builds on the existing guide and is designed to provide clear, current, and practical information to e-Assessment practitioners, or those thinking of adopting e-Assessment. The toolkit offers useful tools and resources, helping users to develop and share their knowledge for effective implementation.

The toolkit is available at <http://toolkit.efutures.org>. Ofqual welcomes any feedback through the online ratings tools, comment and question facilities.

For more information on the new Ofqual site, please contact Francesca Dowler at fran.dowler@ofqual.gov.uk

Legal Aspects of the Use of Technology in Assessment

JISC Legal have published a paper considering the legal issues which may arise in relation to the use of e-Assessment in UK further and higher education. Covering questions such as:

- What happens if the technology doesn't work or goes wrong?
- What happens if a student 'hacks' or cheats in a technology-based assessment?
- What if the student objects to taking the technology-based assessment?

Download the paper (PDF, 180kB) here: <http://tinyurl.com/ychj4jo>

eAA Mission Statement

"The eAA campaigns for the widening of the effective use of e-Assessment in support of learning. The eAA will do this by encouraging individuals and organisations to make good use of e-Assessment, by explaining the issues to the public and by influencing educational thinking and policy."

Corporate Membership

The eAA is delighted to welcome JISC to the ranks of corporate membership!

Current corporate members of the eAA include:

[Cambridge Assessment*](#)
[SOA*](#)
[CCEA*](#)
[Pearson*](#)
[AQA](#)
[City & Guilds](#)
[AlphaPlus*](#)
[ALTA*](#)
[BTL*](#)
[SCHOLAR*](#)
[TAG*](#)
[WJEC](#)
[CARET*](#)
[JISC](#)

* Founding members

Snippets

Physical Sciences Question Bank

<http://tinyurl.com/ldak4p>

A collection of several hundred e-Assessment questions in the areas of physics and chemistry; the question bank allows questions to be downloaded in a variety of formats compatible with systems such as Moodle, Blackboard, and Questionmark Perception. A Rich Text format is also available for import into a word processor.

Turnitin Settlement

<http://tinyurl.com/nvboe6>

The four students who sued iParadigms (developers of the Turnitin plagiarism detection system) over alleged copyright infringement have decided to settle out of court. Both sides have decided to forego any further action, though a lawyer from the plaintiffs' side hasn't ruled out seeking other clients to pursue the matter further.

Evaluation of e-Portfolio Software

<http://tinyurl.com/ytkovh6>

Although this paper from Danube University Krems was produced a year ago, it's an interesting attempt at defining a set of criteria by which e-Portfolio solutions can be judged. It should be noted that any of the e-Portfolios in the report have undergone considerable development since its publication.

Winter Edition

The winter edition of the eAA newsletter is scheduled for the end of January. We had said that we would be covering the thorny issue of how to successfully embed e-Assessment into the curriculum in this edition of the newsletter. Unfortunately, this proved to be a little too thorny for us and we couldn't pull it together in time, so we'll be focussing on this area in the next edition. If you have any insights that you'd like to share, then we'd love to hear from you.

As always, we welcome your feedback on this edition and any suggestions for future topics. Items should be submitted electronically to the Editor, Kenji Lamb, at the JISC Regional Support Centre Scotland North & East:

klamb@rsc-ne-scotland.ac.uk

(deadline for contributions is 22nd January, 2010)



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