

UECA PD Fest: Shape, 26 October, 2019

UECA Benchmarking Forum

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1. What is peer review benchmarking?

‘the practice of colleagues providing and receiving feedback on one another’s unit/subject outlines, assessment tasks and marking criteria to ensure that assessment is aligned to intended learning outcomes and includes a calibration process to ensure comparability of achievement standards and an opportunity for professional learning’ (Booth et al., 2015)

2. Why use peer review benchmarking?

1. Our Students

1.1 over 700,000 international enrolments in education in Australia (2018)

1.2 approx. 30% of Higher Ed enrolments enter via an ELICOS pathway (often EAP) – **responsibility to get it right**

2. Our Staff = PD

2.1 opportunity to learn from each other and develop

2.2 opportunity to standardise judgements/marking

3. Our Programs

3.1. Continuous program improvement

3.2 Helps validate claims we are making about learning outcomes

4. Legislative Framework

4.1 ELICOS Standards 2018 (Standard P4.1 c (ii))

4.2 Higher Education Standards Framework [5.3.1, 5.3.4; 5.3.7; 1.4.1; 1.4.3; 1.4.4]



3. UECA's Peer Review Project

External Referencing of the ELICOS Standards and International Education [ERESIE] Project 2018-2019

- **Aim:** facilitate mutual learning among member Centres and enable institutions to validate their policies, processes and **assessment standards**
- **Focus:** *Standard P4: Assessment of ELICOS students*
- **External reference point:** Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) 3 categories at 6 levels:
 - *Basic user (A1 & A2) Independent user (B1 & B2) and Proficient user (C1 & C2)*
 - It now defines 'plus' levels (e.g. B1+, B2+) to differentiate within these
- **Review Management System:** *Peer Review Portal* for sector-level data collection

4. What are we peer reviewing?

In setting up a review project you need to ask some fundamental questions about your programs:

What are you claiming about English Language Proficiency? (Construct - Program Learning Outcomes - PLOs)

Is your ELP construct clearly linked to your assessment tasks and their rubrics?

These questions will help you identify which external frame of reference is best suited to your curriculum

Assessment rubrics and rating scales (such as the CEFR) become the de facto construct you are assessing (Knoch 2011: 81).

Rubrics and scales operationalise a construct (Academic English Proficiency) that cannot be directly measured in itself.

It is important to acknowledge the fundamental role that the construct definition plays in assessment scale design (Fulcher 2003: 115).

i.e. The slightly aggressive taxi driver had a point.

5. What are we peer reviewing? EAP

Took a broad view of what language is to be taught and assessed. Importance of both sub-skills (e.g. writing as in Tests) and an explicit focus on higher-order language skills: academic literacies (paraphrase, synthesis, referencing etc.)

Develop students' proficiency in English academic literacy practices

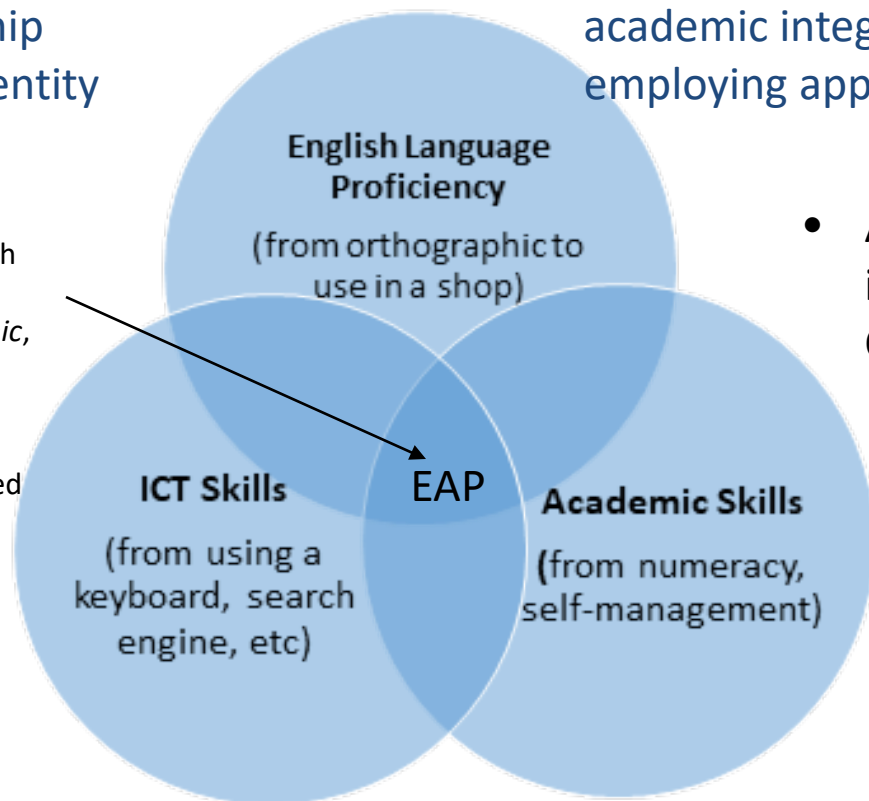
Text ownership

Academic identity

academic integrity: paraphrasing/in-text citation/referencing

employing appropriate register and pragmatic use (e.g. netiquette, report features)

Intersect is where foundational and high order skills are employed in *academic, digital and English literacy practices*. These are always institutionally situated (i.e. socio-cultural)

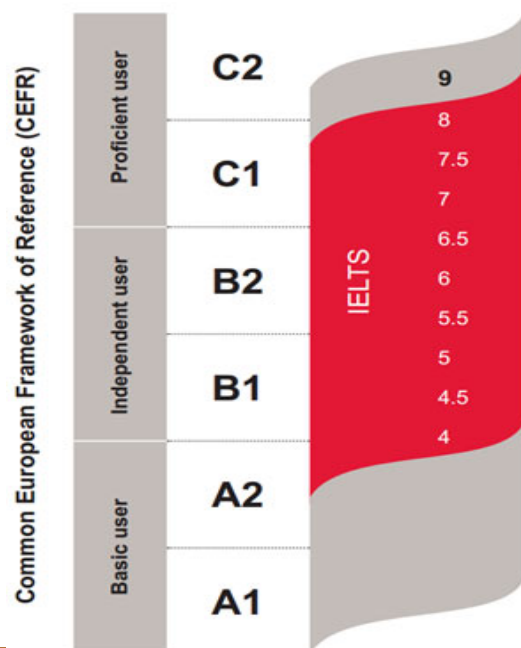


- Academic language requires argumentation, which often involves combining different sources (Cho & Bridgeman, 2012; Cumming, 2013; Hyland, 2006; Pennycook, 1996).



6. What external point of reference?

- Originally developed as a frame of reference for communicating about threshold standards of language across Europe
- Widely used: to develop and benchmark university entrance language tests (B2 being the most common Deygers, Zeidler, Vilcu, & Carlsen, 2018). In Aisa CEFR-J, CCFR (see Read, 2019) Americas Normand-Marconnet & Bianco (2015).

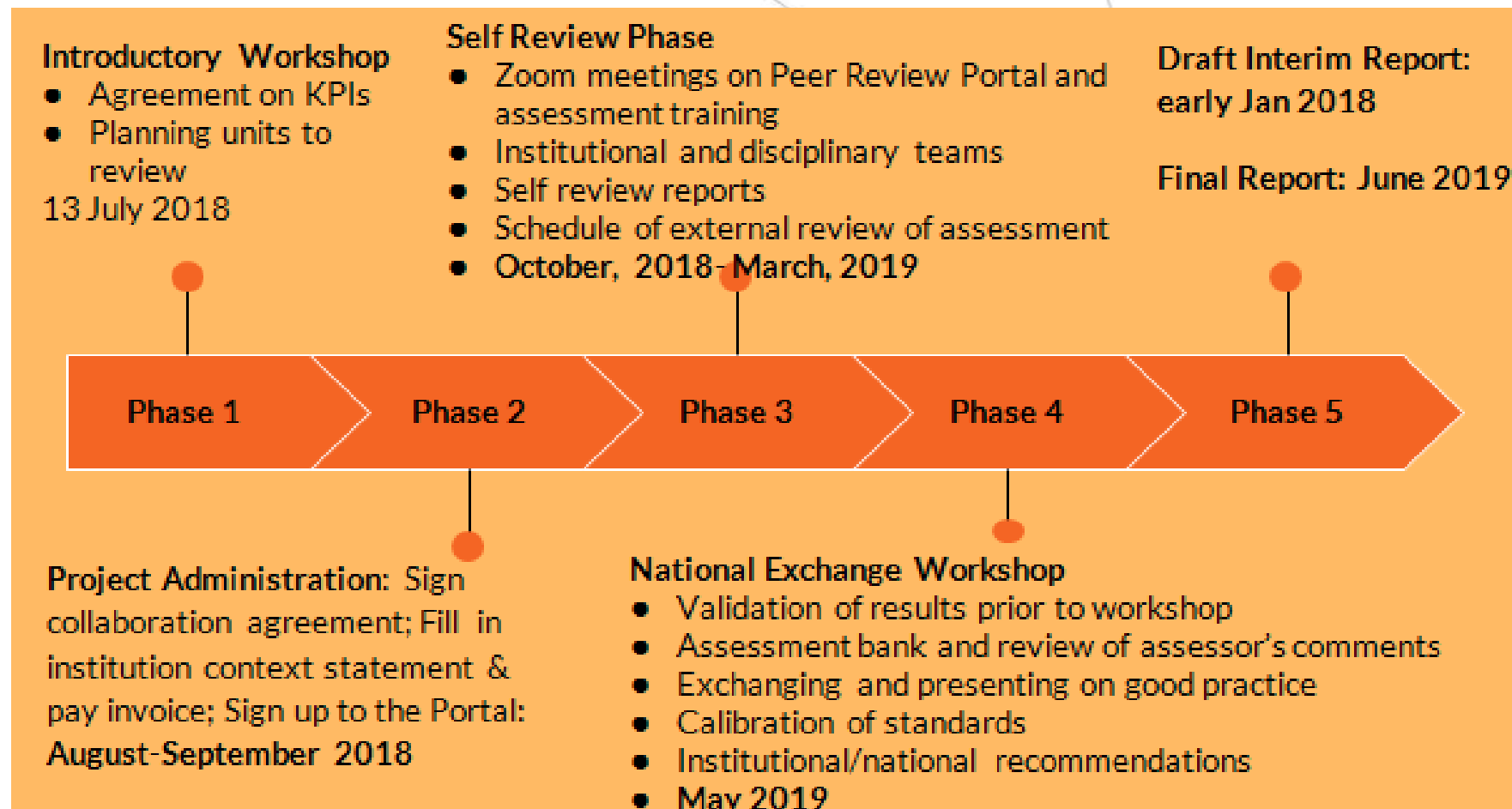


- Takes real-world language use as a starting point
- Good fit for UECA institutions' construct of English Language Proficiency: Council of Europe has released a *CEFR Companion Volume with New Descriptors (2018)* containing written work descriptors, p.173-235; *NEW* written reports and essays p.77, and importantly on mediation (paraphrase)
- **CEFR levels and IELTS correspondence: not 1:1**

7. When to review: Participants and timeline

20 Participating Institutions

- ACU CQU Curtin Flinders
- Hawthorn (Uni of Melbourne)
- James Cook Uni Monash
- QUT RMIT Training SCU
- Swinburne Uni of Adelaide
- UOW College UNE Newcastle
- USydney UTas
- UWA VU Western Sydney Uni



8. The panel

What was submitted?

Learnings:

About your program

About Direct Entry Programs in Australian Universities

More broadly



9. What external point of reference?

CEFR is not without critics:

- Initial versions of the CEFR were formulated to be applicable across a range of contexts and situations (North, 2000) – context/genre independent (i.e. underspecified) as such it underrepresents the complexities of academic writing (McNamara, Morton, Storch & Thompson, 2018).
- Descriptors: impressionistic (Alderson 2007; Fulcher, 2004, 2012), vague and incoherent terminology (Harsch & Rupp, 2007) - leads to variant interpretation by raters.

Or its champions:

- But the new CV includes new descriptors (e.g. mediation and appropriateness, Goodier, 2018) and there is consensus amongst many that it can be used as a valid tool to develop a shared understanding of threshold standards (Deygers, Van Gorp, & Demeester, 2018; Harsch & Martin, 2012) - “socialization into communities of practice” (Kramsch, 2002),

10. How to peer review? An example

Develop shared interpretation and co-develop resources for the peer review with participants

Convene an expert panel – the UECA Committee discussed and agreed on a version of the CEFR scales for use.

Participating Centres were sent the new CEFR Companion Volume as pre-reading. Three Guiding Documents (process) were produced over 6 months for participants

Assess together

Assessing (judgment) involves both subjective and objective knowledge (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982) therefore even experienced raters will differ in their assessment at times (Harsch & Hartig, 2015). UECA employed consensus moderation (Nulty, 2017; Sadler, 2013):

- o trial mark the sample of student work against the rubric
- o compare with each other provisionally allocated marks
- o engage in focused discussion about how marks should be allocated
- o reach agreement on an appropriate overall academic achievement standard

Identify assessment samples

For each written in-course, formative assessment item worth 20% or more: three samples each of a Pass and a (just) Fail with the marking rubric; and or each written Exit or Capstone/summative assessment three samples each of up to three Grades/levels with the marking rubrics

Calibrate

Use technology or meetings to bring participants together. Report judgments.

11. Lessons Learnt from the Peer Review



12. Summary

- The UECA ERESIE project took a **validated, user-oriented Proficiency Scale** containing generalised, abstract descriptions of what learners are likely to be able to do at levels. The CEFR was our **external frame of reference**. We used **consensus moderation** as our practice.
- Centres broadly welcomed outcomes of the benchmarking: suggestions for improvement and development of a shared interpretation of CEFR levels.
- **Issues:** Though updated to capture the features of reports and essays, there are still gaps in the scales (e.g. B2+ Grammar and Vocab range) and occasionally ill-matched descriptors for academic language (e.g. C1+ appropriateness “including emotional, allusive and joking usage”).
- **Response:** UECA plans to develop a repository of sector-validated, annotated samples at levels for further rater-training.
- **Recommendation:** plan any peer-review, commit to investing resources.

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Thank you & see you at the *UECA Assessment Symposium*, July 18-19th 2020
Southern Cross University

