HETAC pilot research
Assessing the impact of higher education and training on learners: introduction and overview

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Outline

- Background
- Pilot study overview
- The assessment
- Challenges
- Data and reporting
HETAC Background & Rationale for Proposed Research Feb 2009

(at www.hetac.ie, ‘news’)
Pilot study overview

- Scoping phase
- Consultation and expression of interest
- Tender (Feb ’09)
- Selection and planning (March ’09)
- Spring testing (April/May ’09)
- Autumn testing (Sept/Oct ’09)
- Academic advisory meetings (Dec ’09 & Feb ’10)
- Analysis (Dec ’09 onwards)
- Reporting (preliminary: Feb ’10; full: June ’10)
The assessment

- Cross-sectional design (first and final year degree students) to measure ‘value added’

- Designed to measure the following skills:
  - Critical reasoning
  - Analytic reasoning
  - Problem solving
  - Written communication

- Designed to measure levels of institutional performance, not individual student performance

- Online
- Proctored environment
The assessment

1. Critical Reasoning Test (CRT)

   “Program designed to gauge learners’ skills in decision making and argument analysis.”

   - 36 multiple choice questions
   - 45 minutes
2. Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)

- "A holistic assessment of critical thinking, analytic reasoning, written communication and problem solving skills."

- 90 minute **Performance Task**
  
- Or

- 75 minute **Analytic Writing Task**
  (combining a 45 minute Make-an-Argument prompt & a 30 minute Critique-an-Argument prompt)

- Includes **Scholastic Level Exam (SLE):** "12-14 minute, multiple choice cognitive ability test that provides a measure of incoming ability."
Challenges

Including:
- Recruitment/participation
- Motivation
Data and reporting

- Likely benefit to participating institutions:
  - information on their incoming students’ generic skills
  - information on their final-year students’ generic skills
  - information on the difference between these two groups
  - the opportunity to request additional analysis regarding factors likely to influence performance (through participation in academic advisory groups)

- Planned reports:
  - preliminary report: February 2010
  - full report: June 2010
1. HETAC’s *Assessment and Standards 2009*

2. OECD’s Feasibility Study for the International Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)
   - http://www.oecd.org/edu/ahelo

3. Australian Council for Educational Research

4. Council for Aid to Education/ Collegiate Learning Assessment
   - http://www.collegiatelearningassessment.org/