



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

What was this student doing? Evidencing validity in A level assessments

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Validity is about the extent to which the inferences made from an assessment's outcomes are appropriate. A claim of validity is generally agreed to require evidence of a number of factors. Whilst a number of possible frameworks for evaluating validity have been proposed, there have been few attempts to apply such frameworks in the UK.

As part of the piloting of a multi-faceted methodology for providing comprehensive validity evidence, this paper reports some of the evidence garnered to address one of the validation questions within the framework used: *'Do performances on exam tasks reflect relevant qualities/intended thought processes?'*

Eleven questions from the examinations of an international A level geography qualification were selected. For each exam question, six geography experts were presented with the question and its mark scheme and asked to identify the processes that they would expect students to use to answer each sub-question well. The experts were then shown responses to the question from three students (one strong, one average and one weak response) and were asked to identify the processes that they thought the students had actually used to arrive at these answers. Finally, the experts were asked to reflect on the match between the expected and apparent processes.

The experts' views on the anticipated and perceived processes were analysed, looking for commonalities. Additionally, expected and apparent processes were compared, with reference to the experts' reflections.

The paper will report on stronger and weaker matches between expected and apparent processes and what these suggest with respect to this aspect of validity.



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