

## **The validity of teacher assessed Independent Research Reports contributing to Cambridge Pre-U GPR**

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[http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/digitalAssets/203014\\_ResearchMatters14\\_-\\_06\\_2012\\_2\\_.pdf](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/ca/digitalAssets/203014_ResearchMatters14_-_06_2012_2_.pdf)

### **Background**

The Cambridge Pre-U is an international post-16 qualification designed to prepare candidates to succeed at their university studies. It is administered by University of Cambridge International Examinations. The independent research report (IRR) is a component of the Cambridge Pre-U GPR. Candidates undertake research and write a 5,000 word report, which is assessed by the candidate's teacher. The candidate and teacher (supervisor) meet during the project to discuss the research. Two of the assessment criteria are for assessing the candidate's research process and communication as evidenced during the candidate-supervisor relationship.

### **Research Literature**

The *Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* (AERA, APA, NCME, 1999 p.9) frame test validity in terms of "the concept or characteristic that a test is designed to measure". That is, the *Standards* reflect a construct-centred approach to test validity. This perspective draws on the view that the theoretical, underlying construct such as mathematical aptitude, represented by an observable test score is the foundation for evaluating a test. A potential threat to validity is construct irrelevant variance (CIV) which occurs when an irrelevant construct(s) is assessed. Unless eradicated, CIV compromises the validity of grade/mark interpretation.

A literature review showed several behaviours which might be sources of CIV if they relate to marks. Examples include assessors expressing feelings towards the candidate, and estimating the candidate's effort invested in the work.

### **Research question**

Did CIV occur when teachers assessed candidates' research process and communication in the IRR unit?

### **Method**

92 candidates entered an independent research report. Teachers recorded comments on candidates' reports, and all available comments were collected. 60 comments related to assessing the research process and 62 comments related to assessing communication. Each behaviour was used as a category in a coding framework. Each comment was searched for each behaviour. For instance the comment "Candidate was always very well informed, very well read, very focused and considered. Her desire to learn and complete

this report was impressive from start to finish and she needed very little support from her supervisor." fitted the category: "Teacher expressed feelings towards the candidate".

### **Findings**

Only three out of 122 comments indicated a behaviour which might be a source of CIV. The lack of behaviours meant it was unnecessary, indeed impossible, to statistically relate the behaviours to marks. There was no evidence of CIV in assessing the IRR research process or communication.