COMPUTERIZING THE PLACEMENT TEST FOR REMOTE STUDENT PLACEMENT

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ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

• Administered to all incoming International Students at Kansas State
• Scores place students into one of three options:
  • Full Time University
  • Part Time University / Part Time English Language Program
  • Full Time English Language Program
• The test has four parts or skills
  • Reading
  • Writing (essay)
  • Structure (grammar)
  • Listening
ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST

• Is a paper and pencil test
  • Essay is written and evaluated by two raters
  • Reading and structure are multiple choice tests with prompts on page
  • Listening is a multiple choice test with an oral prompt
    • Reading, Structure, and Listening are completed on Scantron sheets and computer scored
• Each skills raw score is converted to a T-score
• Based on their total and part scores they are placed into their levels
  • Levels 136-150 are based on a total number
  • Levels 152 and 154 require all skills have a minimum score
GO TEACHER

• Partnership with Ecuador to teach English Teachers both English and Teaching skills
• KSU is the lead institution working with four partner programs
  • All programs are required to have the same pre-/post-test
• The pre-test is used for placement decisions
• The post-test is used to evaluate student growth and program effectiveness
• The EPT was selected due to its availability and use at KSU
• The students are here for a 7 month program
  • 1 Spring and Summer semester
  • Around 300 students come with each cohort
WHY COMPUTERIZE

• We were looking for a secure and efficient way to test at all the schools
• According to Dolan and Burling in the Handbook on Measurement, Assessment, and Evaluation in Higher Education one of the key features of a Computer Based Test (CBT) is, “increasing the efficiency of the assessment process”.
• By using a Learning Management System (LMS) we could enhance the security and have a convenient delivery mechanism
• We decided to use Kansas State Online (KSOL) to build and deliver the test
• We were able to use the original EPT questions from an existing test form
• We were then able to move to the new testing software
BENEFITS OF A CBT

• The biggest benefits to a CBT for our uses are:
  • Security-
    • Easier to control than paper and pencil
    • Allowed KSU to maintain control of access to the test at the partners
  • Efficiency-
    • Easier than paper copies
    • Allows for remote testing with only equipment requirements
  • Scoring-
    • Faster and more efficient because computer scored
    • Exported in a usable and convertible file
  • Information Control-
    • Again allowed KSU to maintain control of the materials
HOW WE COMPUTERIZED

- The first step was to decide what we wanted and why
  - A computerized test to make remote testing efficient and secure
  - For the Go Teacher program primarily but once we have it...
    - Late testing, special testing, special programs, etc.

- We then discussed logistics with Mediated Education
  - How we would import the questions
  - Formatting for the questions and background
  - How to design the Listening section (integrate audio or not)
  - How to design the Reading section (multiple questions on same passage)
  - Computerize the Essay portion or not?
  - Could we do the score conversion on KSOL?
HOW WE COMPUTERIZED

• Once the logistics questions were worked out...
• We created a simple three question sample test for each skill
  • We used this to test how it worked
  • We could manipulate the scores to see if we could do a conversion
  • Trouble shoot what we might not have thought of
• We decided not to computerize the Essay at this point
• We learned we would need to export the scores for conversion in Excel
  • We did it once to make sure it would work to export a CSV to Excel
• Then the test design was ready and construction began
  • The process of importing questions, formatting, checking, and testing
BEYOND THE LMS

• The LMS worked but…
  • Our school decided to change to a new LMS
  • The new system was not going to work…
    • Discussed with IT and Mediated Education

• We started researching testing software
  • Had to go to bid, the process took a while

• We finally got testing software
• Thus starting the whole process again…
NEW SOFTWARE

• The Good
  • Many different question types are supported
  • New opportunities for questions types
  • Able to allow individual progress through the test
  • Allowed us to do the T-Score conversion online
  • Can develop an item bank
  • Computer Adaptive Testing could potentially happen

• The Bad
  • Not capable of all we wanted (some had to be developed)
  • Steep learning curve
HOW TO MANAGE

• Know why you want to make a CBT- What need does it serve?
  • Think about how you will deliver it
  • Think about how you will construct it

• Have a point person- ONE person running the project

• BE FLEXIBLE

• Have a plan
  • Make a detailed calendar of steps and plan a timeline
    • It can be changed
    • Always allow about twice the time you think you need

• Know who you can work with to get where you want to go
  • Keep a list of all people involved in the process (with contact information)
FUTURE PLANS

• Having a CBT for Placement testing is an advantage
  • We can use it on campus for late testing
  • We can use it for special programs (like the Go Teacher program)
  • We can use it in other remote testing situations
    • This could involve testing in other countries

• The Future
  • Move to an Item Bank rather than a test Form
  • Eventually allow adaptive testing
  • Creating an online Essay and Speaking component
It's QUESTION TIME!!

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