

Exploring the context and cognitive validity of BESTEP in an EMI HE context

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Taking a mixed-methods approach, the aims of the proposed study are three-fold. First, the study will establish the context validity of the BESTEP Writing test through an expert test scrutiny method. A team of three writing assessment/EMI experts will analyse sample BESTEP Writing Task 2 and Task 3 and published information about the test in relation to a range of contextual parameters. Using a test scrutiny proforma, a focus group discussion will be conducted to examine the extent to which BESTEP Writing represents the target academic writing construct. Second, the study will establish the cognitive validity of the BESTEP Writing test through a large-scale questionnaire investigation. Three hundred participants, estimated at the CEFR levels of B1, B2 and C1, will complete the operational BESTEP Writing test and then complete a cognitive process questionnaire. Confirmatory Factor Analysis will be conducted to establish the underlying construct of academic writing elicited by the test. A one-way ANOVA will also be conducted to examine whether participants of three achievement groups report the use of these processes differently. Finally, the study will examine test takers' and EMI teachers' perceptions of the new BESTEP Writing test. Test takers will be asked about their experience of taking the test, and their perceptions of academic writing in the EMI HE context in general. EMI teachers will be asked to review sample BESTEP Writing test tasks and comment on the extent to which the test represents what their students are required to do. It is anticipated that this study will generate valuable empirical evidence supporting the context and cognitive validity of the new BESTEP Writing test. Findings will also offer useful insights into BESTEP for its further enhancement and ongoing use.