



**Newsletter | Issue 9 | 46<sup>th</sup> IAEA Annual Conference**

**“New Norms in Assessment After the Pandemic”**

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## Welcome to the Latest IAEA Newsletter

“Conferences – as we know, are a mainstay of most academic disciplines. Although well into a second year of the global pandemic, the Association has been able to host its first annual conference since Baku in 2019, albeit a virtual one. This year’s online conference in October afforded an opportunity for educational assessors from many different countries and cultures to explore together what has been learned throughout the last 18 months that might be applied to future assessments (or ways of new assessment) for the benefit of learners.



For understandable reasons, the online event was a distilled version of our usual conference activities. Despite this, nearly 150 people representing 24 countries, registered for the conference. All presentations, including three high-quality keynotes, were well attended by delegates who were able to pose challenging questions for all our presenters through online community engagement tools. Whilst the value of face-to-face interaction will never go away and despite the fact that virtual conferences lack the intimacy of a physical gathering, the experience of in-person networking and the energy generated by such interactions, I have to say that I came away from the entire experience feeling that I had ‘been at conference’.

In this conference-dedicated Newsletter, the President and Vice-President of IAEA reflect on their conference experiences. We also hear from the hosts of the 2022 Annual Conference in Mexico City about their ongoing preparations. We provide an overview of the 2021 conference presentations in terms of their content and any emerging messages. Finally, there is a call for volunteers to participate in the pre-pilot phase of the IAEA International Standards. Details of how to participate are provided.

If you would like to contribute or have other ideas to suggest, please contact me:

[shawstuard@gmail.org](mailto:shawstuard@gmail.org)

We would be very happy to receive information relating to general news, past events, news from IAEA affiliated organisations, news relating to grant/scholarship/internship opportunities, professional development opportunities (upcoming conferences, workshops or short courses), and special contributions which can be in the form of an article or short essay featuring research, developments or perspectives on a topic of the author’s choosing, relating to educational assessment.

Enjoy!”

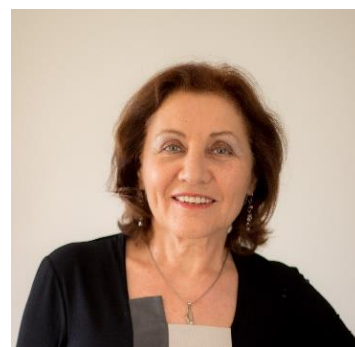
## Message from the President

*Dr. Anat Ben-Simon*

Dear IAEA members,

We are approaching the dawn of 2022 and the whole world is still struggling with the Covid19 pandemic. It has been almost two years since the onset of the pandemic, one wave after another, lockdown after lockdown, and no end foreseen in the near future.

These are difficult times for all the players in the education field: student, parents, teachers and examination boards. Yet, I do hope that by now most of you are familiar enough with the pandemic landscape and have learned to cope fairly successfully with these unusual circumstances' both in your personal and professional life.



The BoT have worked very hard throughout the year in an effort to maintain the momentum of the Association, keeping it relevant, and doing its best to keep you all in the loop via mail messages, Newsletters and the General Assembly Meeting that took place at the online annual conference.

We were thrilled to be able to organize an annual meeting this year, see familiar and new faces, exchange ideas and learn about innovations and new trends in the field of educational assessment. I wish to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the members of the conference planning committee: **Dennis Opposs** from OFQUAL, UK, **Naveed Yousuf** from Aga Khan University Examination Board, Pakistan & **Emmanuel Sibanda** from UMALUSI, South Africa, who did an absolutely fantastic job in organizing the conference and moderating the sessions. I also wish to thank all speakers and all participants.

As already noted, these are difficult times. However, it is highly important for the Association to keep update its members during these uncertain times. I do hope that you'll stay with us even if for one reason or another you weren't able to pay the membership fees.

Finally, I want to wish you all Happy Holidays and a very Happy New Year wherever you are in the world and whatever holidays you are celebrating right now or in the near future.

## Message from the Vice-President

*Dennis Opposs*

Regrettably the pandemic caused the cancellation of our usual annual conferences in 2020 and 2021. Never since the founding of the Association over 40 years ago had members not been able to gather in one place each year to hear from distinguished speakers, learn about research findings, share their practices and problems, and meet old and new friends from other parts of the world. In planning the recent on-line conference, the Board of Trustees aimed to provide an event that would offer at least some of these experiences and bring our members back together again if only in a virtual world.



We decided to have a much slimmer programme than at a normal annual conference. That's partly because it's hard to have a live event that happens at a suitable time no matter whether you are in Fiji or Malaysia or Kenya or the United States. There are significant costs involved in running even a slim event. There's creating a website, setting up a registration system, paying for Zoom licenses, getting on-line technical support etc. Recognising the financial position of many of our members, we decided to make the registration fees quite small. To meet as many of the costs as possible, we then set ourselves a target of attracting 200 attendees.

We were fortunate in that almost all the distinguished people who we approached to be speakers or session chairs kindly agreed. The choice of who to approach was complicated by our wish to have a good geographical spread when selecting those taking the main roles in the conference. We also found excellent technology partners - Easy Conferences from Cyprus.

Thanks to my colleagues on the planning committee – Emmanuel Sibanda from Umalusi in South Africa and Naveed Yousuf from the Aga Khan University Examination Board in Pakistan – I think we achieved our aim. The inputs at the event were of high quality and generated some good discussion amongst the 149 participants from 24 countries. That was all helped greatly by the video system working so well.

Of course, the quality of discussion is much better, and the pleasure of meeting people is much greater when we are all in the same space together. Let's hope that the dreadful pandemic abates and that we can assemble again next year.

## Message from the 2022 Conference Hosts

Following the 2021 Annual Conference held online last October, we are very much looking forward to receiving you in Mexico City for the 2022 Annual Conference. We hope that the ongoing situation around the world will not prevent us from having a memorable conference next year. We have been working hand-in-hand with relevant partners around the world to create amazing academic, cultural and social experiences for you to take back home.

Now, more than ever, working together towards the attainment of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals should be part of our daily outcomes as we, being knowledgeable and experienced in the educational assessment field, can contribute to quality education in every scenario worldwide. That is why the theme of our next conference will focus on these relevant issues by having distinguished keynote speakers that may strengthen our passion and interest towards assessment.



Additionally, Mexico - being such an amazing country filled with culture and traditions, will make the perfect combination for you to enjoy the 46th Annual Conference. Our cultural events will include a visit to the famous pyramids of Teotihuacan, a tour around the City Centre, the most emblematic of Latin America and an extraordinary sightseeing of the iconic Castle of Chapultepec located just at the end of the most important avenue in Mexico City with an amazing view of the area. Our fabulous music and dance will make for a perfect closing of your experience in this unique country.



However, the most essential part of this Conference is you, so we encourage you to actively participate sharing your research and experience through a paper or poster presentation within the following subthemes:

- Rethinking Assessment for a New Era
- Measurement as an essential element of Quality Education (validity, reliability, fairness)
- Ethics and Social Responsibility in Assessment
- Educational Inclusion and Equity in Assessment
- Assessment for Lifelong Learning

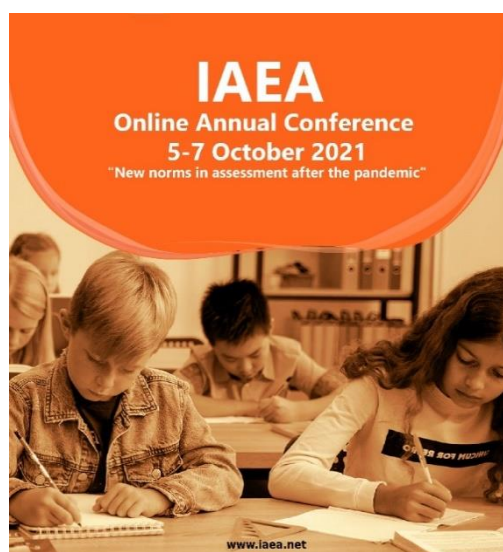
See you in Mexico!

## IAEA 2021 Online Annual IAEA Conference

The 2021 IAEA – the first to take place online, was held between 5<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> October.

### Conference Theme

This year the IAEA conference theme was: ‘New norms in assessment after the pandemic’. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided huge challenges for organisations around the world trying to run their high stakes assessments for young people in schools and colleges. Established methods have had to be modified or even abandoned completely. The online conference provided an opportunity to explore collectively what we have learned from that experience that might be applied to future assessments for the benefit of students.



### Conference ‘Stats’

The conference was attended by 149 delegates representing 24 countries (including 118 Members, 26 Non-members, and 5 speakers registered as Keynote speakers).

Countries represented comprised: Australia, Bahrain, Barbados, Canada, China, Fiji, Hong Kong, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Slovenia, S. Africa, S. Korea, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

The conference included 10 presentations from 9 countries.

### Conference Presentations

The President of IAEA and the Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation (NITE) in Jerusalem (Israel) – Dr Anat Ben-Simon, flanked the conference with an opening and a closing address to conference delegates.

Delegates enjoyed a number of fine keynote presentations. Each keynote engendered more than its share of enthusiastic discussion amongst conference participants:

- ❖ The first Keynote on day one of the conference was presented by Professor Emerita Rukhsana W. Zuberi of the Aga Khan University in Pakistan. Entitled: *Excellence in Student Assessment – Making the Cut*, Professor Zuberi explained in great detail how the assessment of student progress, whilst complex, must be fit-for-purpose and must actively promote learning to achieve curricular objectives and outcomes. She described how the ‘Assessment Programme’ needs to demonstrate robust, unbiased assessment of student progress in order to ensure that only students who meet competency standards progress and are certified. Moreover, that the programme needs to be aligned to the school’s vision, mission, curriculum, teaching and learning. Prof. Zuberi went on to explain that Faculty or staff development, formative assessments, remediation processes and feedback loops remain key to successful assessment of outcomes. She argued that question banks and quality assurance processes should be continuously revitalised. Moreover, that robust Assessment Programmes are dependent on standardisation, objectivity and standard setting, and need multiple assessments by multiple assessors, multiple times for unbiased and longitudinal profiling of students, and should have





built-in continuous monitoring and quality improvement elements. Prof. Zuberi also argued that fair, transparent, assessment policies, should be co-constructed with stakeholders and be made available in the public domain. Prof. Zuberi concluded by asserting that there is a critical need for educational institutions and examination bodies to find innovative, resilient and sustainable practices for on-line assessments to continue to aspire for excellence in student assessment as they move to a new norm today and beyond these challenging times.

- ❖ The session that followed Prof. Zuberi's keynote - Examinations during times of uncertainty – allowed conference participants to gain a greater understanding of how examination organisations from around the world have dealt with the pandemic and how they plan to deal with similar events in future. The three panellists were invited to respond to comments and questions from participants:

- Wayne Wesley, Registrar and CEO, Caribbean Examinations Council
- Rufus Poliah, Chief Director, Department of Basic Education, South Africa
- Cindy Chiu, Senior Manager for Schools Examinations and Assessment, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Each panellist was given five minutes to describe how their organisation dealt with the pandemic and how they planned to deal with similar events in future. Once each panellist had spoken, two other speakers briefly contributed their experiences:

- David Njengere, Chief Executive Officer, Kenya National Examination Council.
- Dennis Opposs, Standards Chair, Ofqual, England.

- ❖ The second keynote, entitled Educational Measurement in the 21st Century: Meet Digital-first Assessments, was delivered on the second day of the conference by Dr. Alina von Davier of Duolingo and EdAstra Tech of the United States. In a fascinating overview, Dr. von Davier described and discussed how AI technologies are being used for digital-first assessment development and scoring while satisfying the psychometric constraints for reliability, targeted difficulty, validity, and fairness. Digital-first assessments rely on integrative frameworks that help align the theory with the design, data collection, and scoring. One of these frameworks is computational psychometrics which blends psychometrics and machine learning methods to ensure that the test is reliable and valid for its uses. Dr. von Davier began her presentation by suggesting that many of the changes engendered throughout the pandemic have resulted in pivoting our activities to a virtual environment, providing a continuity and normalcy to our lives, albeit in new ways with most of the traditional educational assessments being paralysed by as they could not pivot quickly to an online delivery. She counterbalanced this by suggesting that digital-first assessments have turned out to be a perfect solution in the time of transition. Digital-first assessments are assessments that are delivered online, anytime, anywhere. Such assessments have a strong focus on the test taker's experience while adhering to the psychometric and validity standards for high-stakes assessments. Many features of the digital-first assessments are enabled by the use of what are called, human-in-the-loop AI, such as automated item generation, automated scoring of text, speech, and video, detection of prepared generic responses, etc. Human subject matter expertise for the design and evaluation of each of these processes and methods blended with the AI affordances to scale up and speed up the development, administration and scoring of the test, has led to a new paradigm for testing. In digital-first assessments, the use of AI-technologies are the backbone of the whole assessment. AI supports test development, from test design through data collection through



scoring and reporting. Dr. von Davier made clear that it is not an after-thought enhancement to the test.

- ❖ The last keynote on day three of the conference was given by Isabel Nisbet from the University of Cambridge. Isabel's insightful presentation was entitled Fairness in assessment - looking forward from the pandemic. She began by asking a number of fundamental questions: What do we mean by fair assessment? What are the most important fairness issues for assessment professionals and the public, and how do they compare? How has the experience of Covid-19 affected our responses to these questions and the options for fair assessment in the future? And what is the relevance (if any) to assessment "insiders" of the wider debates in current public and academic life, such as "culture wars" and critical race theory? Isabel addressed these questions by building on the thinking in "Is Assessment Fair", which she co-authored with Stuart Shaw. Isabel presented fairness as a societal concept and suggested that assessment needs to be seen as "situated" in its context when considering fairness. Isabel introduced Mislevy's concept of "conditional fairness" in this context. In her conclusion, Isabel posed some fairness challenges to the audience, in the hope that these can be applied to other topics in the conference and to the professional and academic work of delegates.
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- ❖ Following Isabel's presentation, another two, shorter keynotes were given. The first was by Dr. Mathew Hillier who specialises in Digital Assessment in Higher Education and is currently working as an e-assessment academic at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia. Dr Hillier's presentation – Balancing tensions: authenticity, integrity and scalability in online assessment in higher education, focused on the tensions faced by assessors in the contemporary higher education sector and explored the disconnect between the way assessment is conducted and student's everyday experiences. Dr Hillier explained how the higher education sector is increasingly facing demands by governments and society to produce graduates who are 'work ready' with twenty first century skills, amidst increasing attention on assessment integrity. Yet, higher education institutions are being faced with ever decreasing budgets and stretched staff-to-student ratios. He described how the COVID-19 pandemic has brought this to a head in all parts of the world where teaching, learning and assessment have moved online at a rate not previously seen. Dr. Hillier explored frameworks to describe these competing demands on assessors and provided examples of assessment designs, from the basic to the sophisticated, that aim to meet these challenges head on.
  - ❖ The second session focused on the assessment of online learning courses in higher education. Dr. Anat Ben-Simon - the Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute for Testing and Evaluation (NITE) in Jerusalem, talked about Assessment in the world of online courses: opportunities and methods. Linking her presentation with those given by Dr. von Davier and Dr. Hillier, Dr. Ben-Simon presented ideas and techniques that can be used in the assessment of learning in online courses. Some of the techniques capitalise on the advantages that the digital platform offers and others focus on the incorporation of assessment, as much as possible, into the learning process. Given the versatility of online courses and the many assessment models, Dr. Ben-Simon explained how online courses will be characterised and classified into various categories and how efforts will be made to adjust the assessment methods to these categories.



## Emerging Messages

There is little doubt that the Covid experience has forced the educational assessment world to look for alternatives to traditional terminal exams. Many (if not all) of the alternatives explored have been far from perfect. At least three pre-dominant messages appear to have emerged from the conference presentations and discourse surrounding them:

- 1) Once the pandemic has subsided, it may well be that the way forward for the educational assessment world is not to return to all aspects of traditional end-of-course exams (the pre-pandemic status quo) - though this would appear to be amongst the easiest of options. Rather, to consider - longer term - new, innovative and fairer approaches to assessment some of which may comprise a mix of modes of 'integrated' assessment.
- 2) Given the disconnect between the way assessment is normally conducted and student's everyday experiences, perhaps there is an ever-greater requirement to enable students to present evidence of their understanding, knowledge and skills using a computer, just as they will have to do in their future academic and working lives.
- 3) There is a growing insistence that the educational assessment world should harness, with even greater vigour, the seemingly inexorable march of new technology

Please note that the conference presentations are now available on the IAEA website: [www.iaea.info](http://www.iaea.info).

## IAEA International Standards: A Call for Volunteers

### *Dennis Opposs (IAEA Vice-President) and the Core Recognition Committee*

During the IAEA AGM, members of the Core Recognition Committee - Wafa Al-Yaqoobi (Bahrain), Naveed Yousuf (Pakistan) and Stuart Shaw (England), gave a short presentation entitled *Life and Times of the IAEA International Standards: The work and remit of the IAEA Recognition Committee*. The presentation was an attempt to update members on where the Standards has come from, where it now, and the way forward. The presenters concluded by calling for volunteer member organisations to participate in a pre-pilot to test how well the Standards work. In the pre-pilot, volunteers would be able to carry out a self-evaluation using as much or as little of the Standards as they wished. The Recognition Committee would provide guidance on the process and would ask for feedback to help the Committee see how to improve the Standards. It was proposed that one member of the core Recognition Committee will be a point of liaison with each volunteer organisation (with support from other members of the Recognition Committee). Volunteer organisations would be provided with a full set of the *International Standards for Educational Assessment Organisations* and further details of the pre-pilot via the designated contact point from the Recognition Committee.



If your organisation might be interested in joining the pre-pilot then please contact the IAEA Vice-President, Dennis Opposs ([dennis.opposs@ofqual.gov.uk](mailto:dennis.opposs@ofqual.gov.uk)), or anyone else in the team: Maaïke Beuving ([m.beuving@cvte.nl](mailto:m.beuving@cvte.nl)), Naveed Yousuf ([naveed.yousuf@aku.edu](mailto:naveed.yousuf@aku.edu)), Shehzad

Jeeva ([shehzad.jeeva@aku.edu](mailto:shehzad.jeeva@aku.edu)), Stuart Shaw ([Shawstuard@gmail.com](mailto:Shawstuard@gmail.com)), Wafa Alyaqoobi ([wafa.alyaqoobi@bqa.gov.bh](mailto:wafa.alyaqoobi@bqa.gov.bh)) or Wan Tak-wing ([twwan819@netvigator.com](mailto:twwan819@netvigator.com)).

We would very much like to hear from you!

## Last Word



The teacher's job is not to transmit knowledge, nor to facilitate learning. It is to engineer effective learning environments for the students. The key features of effective learning environments are that they create student engagement and allow teachers, learners, and their peers to ensure that the learning is proceeding in the intended direction. The only way we can do this is through assessment. That is why assessment is, indeed, the bridge between teaching and learning.

**Dylan Wiliam**

Contributors to this Newsletter have given their consent to publish their text and photos on the IAEA website.