

Auditing a high-stakes national school English test

Foundation Innove

Estonia



Cambridge Assessment English has delivered a comprehensive audit of the Year 12 English test used in state schools across Estonia. Working with Estonia-based education competency consultancy Foundation Innove, the Cambridge team considered key aspects of the test, provided recommendations for future test enhancements, and delivered knowledge transfer workshops designed to build local capacity.

Foundation Innove co-ordinates and promotes general and vocational education across Estonia, including English language testing of all four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Innove currently develops and administers state school English tests at two key stages – the end of basic education (for students aged 15), and upper secondary (for Year 12 – students aged 18). The Year 12 test, which targets Levels B1 and B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), is used by many students to support entry to university both in Estonia and overseas. This is therefore a high-stakes test and as a result Innove considers external evaluation essential for ongoing development and to ensure the test continues to meet international standards. In 2017, Innove therefore asked Cambridge English to audit the quality of its Year 12 test development and

administration process, and to make recommendations for future revisions.

As Innove is an ALTE member (the Association of Language Testers in Europe, as is Cambridge English), best practice assessment methodologies were already in place and so the Cambridge team focused specifically on examiner management and operations. We reviewed all aspects of the test development process, including test construction and CEFR alignment, and provided detailed recommendations for further enhancements. We also ran a series of bespoke training workshops in order to transfer knowledge from Cambridge experts to the Innove team, thereby building local capacity. The workshops, held in-country, focused on the production of test items aligned to the CEFR, following our recommendations.

Feedback has been very positive: Innove was very satisfied with the project and is keen to work with Cambridge again, while workshop delegates all rated the sessions either good or excellent.

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“It is important for Foundation Innove to offer internationally recognised tests and exams whilst also continuing to improve their quality. Collaborating with Cambridge Assessment English on our English tests has enabled Innove and Cambridge to share good practice and learn from each other about the latest trends in teaching and assessing languages.”

Birgit Lao, CEO of Foundation Innove