

British Council East Asia Assessment Research Grants 2015

The British Council Assessment Research Grants are designed to promote research in the area of language assessment which will have a significant impact on assessment practice in the future and add to the growing body of research on the Aptis test.

The purpose of the Assessment Research Grants is to contribute, together with internal British Council research activities, to the validation of Aptis. The research agenda upon which the grants are premised is based on the modified socio-cognitive validation framework (Weir, 2005; O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011) and will build a significant body of substantive evidence of the validity of Aptis.

Projects will be for a period of **one year**. The maximum financial support for individual projects will, in principle, be limited to a maximum of £5,000

Who can apply?

Educational institutions and suitably qualified individuals are invited to apply for funding to undertake applied research projects of relevance to Aptis. This can include:

- Established academics in universities/professional testing organisations
- Post- doctoral fellows

Areas of interest for 2015

The British Council's East Asia Assessment research grants support researchers in conducting and disseminating the highest quality research. Researchers are invited to submit proposals related to the British Council's work in East Asia around language testing and assessment. Areas of particular interest to the British Council in 2015/16 include:

Test development and validation

- Studies focusing on cognitive processing in the speaking, writing, listening or reading components of Aptis
- Studies investigating key criteria involving features of performance in speaking and writing at the Common European Framework of Reference for Language levels assessed in Aptis;
- Investigating the usefulness of applying automated analyses techniques to investigate lexical thresholds and lexical profiles across the Common European Framework of Reference for Language levels assessed in Aptis;
- Studies investigating the predictive validity of Aptis test scores in specific educational or employment contexts.

Aptis test impact

- Studies focusing on the relationship between Aptis test qualities and appropriacy of test use
- Studies focusing on Aptis, including investigations of stakeholders' perceptions of Aptis, or including aspects such as the impact of feedback on teaching and learning, and how test preparation affects scores and attitudes

Localization

- Studies providing an explicit framework for justifiable forms of modification to the content of Aptis tests in order to take account of local contextual needs;
- Studies investigating the impact of localization of Aptis on different stakeholders.

We are also interested in studies focusing on English language assessment as part of education systems and education reform, including the relationship between assessment and teaching methodologies, materials and teacher training

The application process

The applicant will present an original proposal based on one of the areas of interest identified above. The application will contain an outline of the budget and a project plan (see the application form and guidelines for additional information). The text of the proposal should not exceed approximately 2,000 words (including references).

Proposals must be presented on this form provided. Applicants should submit their completed project proposal form by email attachment to the British Council at arag_EA@britishcouncil.org. You will receive a confirmation email when the proposal has reached the British Council.

Deliverables

The Assessment Research Grant recipient will submit three project documents:

1. Interim report: This is due midway through the research period and will briefly outline progress on the project to date.
2. Final Report: This is due roughly 12 months after the start date (seek Key Dates section in this guidance) and should be presented as a formal report in publishable form.
3. A two to three page summary of the research and its findings. This is due with the Final Report and will appeal to readers with little technical knowledge, while still informing the expert reader.

Access to Aptis test materials or score data

It will be possible for researchers to access test materials and/or score data where this is required to complete the research project. This is typically (though not always) retired material and will be provided subject to the researcher signing a standard confidentiality agreement. Where this is necessary, costs of Aptis must be included in the budget plans submitted.

Research ethics and confidentiality

All applications should follow the necessary ethical clearance and confidentiality codes as required by your university/institution/organisation and/or region. All applications should take account of the standards for best practice described in publicly available professional guidelines for assessment. In particular account

should be taken of ILTA Guidelines for Practice, EALTA Guidelines for Good Practice, and the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing.

Who will evaluate the proposals?

Proposals will be peer-reviewed by a panel of international experts in assessment and applied linguistics, who will work with the British Council research team. Applications will be reviewed on a confidential basis and the decision of the reviewers will be final.

Evaluation criteria

The following factors will be taken into consideration when evaluating proposals:

- Does the proposal adequately **contextualise** the proposed project?
- Does **the proposal address a topic that is relevant to the theme of this year's round?**
- Does the proposal clearly outline the **aims** of the project?
- Does the proposal offer a clearly stated **rationale** for the study?
- Does the proposal clearly outline the **methodology** (design, participants, instruments, procedures)?
- Are the **details of the methodology** sufficiently well defined to allow for a meaningful judgement on their value?
- Is the methodology likely to be **feasible** (e.g. number of participants, accessibility of participants etc.).
- Are the **research questions** clearly stated?
- Is the **assistance required** likely to be reasonable and deliverable?
- Have the authors considered **ethical approval**?
- Is there a detailed **budget** breakdown provided?
- Does the budget represent **good value for money**?
- Does the project offer a noteworthy **contribution to the validation of Aptis**?
- Does the project offer a **unique contribution to validation** methodology?
- Is the project likely to result in a paper of **publishable** (web or book chapter) quality?
- Is **the project likely to add value to Aptis**?

Key Dates for Assessment Research Grants:

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| 31 May 2015 | Deadline for submission of proposals |
| 31 July 2015 | Successful applicants notified |
| 31 August 2016 | Final submission of research findings |

If additional information about the assessment research grants and research awards is required, contact the British Council prior to application at araq_EA@britishcouncil.org

Assessment Research Awards

APPLICATION FORM - GUIDELINES

Please complete all details on this application form and submit them to the address given.

Table 1. Overview

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| Name(s) of researcher(s) : | |
| (Please provide more details of participants on Table 2) | |
| Name of institution (body) to administer grant (where applicable): | |
| Project title (i.e. short descriptive title in no more than 15 words): | |
| Research summary (summary of aims, significance and expected outcomes, in no more than 150 words): | |
| Research methodology to be used: | |
| Research timeframe (approx): | |
| Project start date: | |
| Project finish date: | |
| Total amount of funding requested: | |
| (Please provide details on Table 3) | |
| I/We confirm that I/we will agree to the following regulations regarding the publication or presentation of the results of this project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide interim and final reports as detailed in the final contract • To provide a brief non-technical summary of the findings • To publish or present the findings only with the prior agreement of the British Council. | |
| Principal investigator | Signed: |
| Researcher | Signed: |

Duplicate last row for additional participants

Note: digital signatures are sufficient

Table 2. Participant details

Principal investigator

| | | |
|--|--|----------------|
| Full name and title | | |
| Current position | | |
| Organisation/ Department | | |
| Contact address | | |
| Phone: | | e-mail: |
| Highest qualification | | |
| Research interests and achievements | Areas of research interest Awards Publications (indicative) Conference Presentations (indicative) | |

Other researcher(s)

| | | |
|--|--|----------------|
| Full name and title | | |
| Current position | | |
| Organisation/ Department | | |
| Contact address | | |
| Phone: | | e-mail: |
| Highest qualification | | |
| Research interests and achievements | Areas of research interest Awards Publications (indicative) Conference presentations (indicative) | |

Duplicate table and add below for additional participants

Table 3. Budget details

| Detailed budget items | Amount requested |
|--|------------------|
| <p>Personnel This is intended to cover the cost of specialist support (advice; transcription service etc.), the rationale for which is shown in Table 2 (indicate number of days and rate required). XXXX XXXXXX (XX days @£XXX per day)</p> | |
| <p>Travel This is intended to cover one of two areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection (travel to site, for participants and/or researcher) • Travel to international conference (evidence that a paper is to be presented is required) | |
| <p>Equipment This is intended to cover the cost of specialist software (Details here) (Please note that applications for large and expensive items such as PCs or printers are not encouraged)</p> | |
| <p>Other This is intended to allow applicants to indicate areas where support is required, and that do not fit into the other areas.</p> | |
| <p>Administrative costs This is intended to cover any administration costs associated with a research student's study and can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printing Post Telephone Transcription (@£49 + VAT per hour X 10 hours) Clerical 3 days <p style="text-align: right;">Total Administration Costs</p> | |
| <p>TOTAL</p> | |

Note: applicants are expected to limit their requests to one or two areas of support (you are not expected to submit proposals that require funding in all areas).

Please submit this form electronically to arag_EA@britishcouncil.org