

**EDCI 520.601**  
**Assessment of Language Learners**  
**FAST TRAIN, Summer 2011**

July 20-29, 8:30 a.m. to 3:20 p.m.

Enterprise Hall, Room 274

**Instructor:** Kate Montgomery, M.Ed.  
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**Course Description**

This graduate course provides an introduction to basic principles and current and innovative approaches to **classroom-based assessment of language learning students in ESL, bilingual education, foreign language, and grade-level classrooms in Grades PK-12, Adult Education, and University programs.** The principles introduced in this course *are also applicable to native speakers of English in general education classrooms.*

Among the topics addressed are: applying research on language acquisition and teaching to instruction and assessment; embedding assessment of oral language, reading, and writing in daily instruction to monitor student progress; setting assessment purpose; ensuring reliability and validity; scaffolding assessments in the content areas; designing and using portfolios; using assessment as feedback for learning; developing scoring rubrics and other performance-based assessments; engaging students in peer and self-assessment; improving grading practices; reviewing language proficiency tests; assessing language learners with special needs; writing multiple-choice tests; and preparing students to take standardized tests.

Graduate students will have opportunities to both critically examine assessment tools used in current practice and to develop their own. **This course is required for both ESL and Foreign Language teacher licensure as well as for the endorsement of teachers who are already licensed.**

## Course Objectives

***Teachers/graduate students completing EDCI 520 will be able to:***

1. ***Compare purposes, advantages, and limitations*** of standardized tests to those of alternative assessments; compare purposes, advantages, and limitations of standardized tests to those of alternative assessments;
2. ***Define concepts and terminology*** used in traditional assessment and in innovative approaches to assessment;
3. ***Critically review language proficiency assessment measures*** for validity, reliability, and cultural bias, and make recommendations for use with English and foreign language learning students (and native speakers of English);
4. ***Identify issues in assessment of language learners with special needs***, such as learning disabilities and/or gifted and talented;
5. ***Critically examine and develop assessment procedures and tools*** for (a) the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and (b) the content areas;
6. ***Link assessment to instruction*** by designing a variety of assessments that are embedded within instructional activities;
7. ***Draft clear and objective performance criteria*** for language learning;
8. ***Add scaffolding to assessment and instruction*** for language learners and at-risk learners;
9. ***Draft a student assessment portfolio*** and involve learners in self-assessment; and
10. ***Prepare language learning students to take standardized tests.***

***Students will be asked to use a computer for preparing course requirements, for accessing Blackboard, and for contacting the instructor and classmates through email.***

**Blackboard:** Each student will access Blackboard using his/her GMU email login name and password to access additional class info: <http://gmu.blackboard.com>

**Instructional approaches include:** Whole class mini-lectures and demonstrations, workshops, small group and peer feedback sessions, field projects, videos, and homework assignments for applying principles discussed in texts and class. ***Interacting in meaningful ways with other grad students/teachers during each class session is essential for success in this course.*** Student reports and projects will be evaluated using performance-based, criterion-referenced scoring rubrics (see pp. 26-28).

### Course Requirements

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|---|-----|--|
| 1. Scaffolding Project                      | 30% | Add scaffolding to assessment activities.<br>(due Day 8, 7/29)   |
| 2. Field Project                            | 35% | Design & pilot test an assessment activity;<br>or analyze current practice & make<br>recommendations; or administer & critique a<br>standardized test.<br>(due ASAP after field test/observation, latest<br>3/15/12) |
| 3. Performance-Based<br>Assessment Project* | 35% | Develop Performance-Based Assessments.<br>(due Day 8, 7/29)  |

\*The Final Project can be conducted in teams of up to three class members.

### Textbooks

O'Malley, J. M. and Valdez Pierce, L. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approaches for teachers*. New York: Longman.

Hughes, A. (2003). *Testing for language teachers*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

### Class Schedule

Prepare to discuss the assigned readings during the class in which they appear.

Date	Topics & Assigned Readings
<p>1 7/20/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 1: INTRO TO THE COURSE.</b> Introductions, syllabus, sign up for groups for Final Project. What does assessment of English learners look like? Validity and reliability in assessment.</p> <p><b>Class 2: SCAFFOLDING ASSESSMENTS.</b> Scaffolding assessments. Scaffolding workshop. Scaffolding Project.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'Malley &amp; Valdez Pierce, Chs. 1-2; Hughes, Chs. 1-6</p>
<p>2 7/21/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 3: ASSESSMENT FOR INITIAL IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT IN AN ESL PROGRAM. ASSESSMENT OF LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.</b> Federal and VA state requirements. WIDA.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> Become familiar with WIDA Consortium and assessments by exploring <a href="http://www.wida.us">www.wida.us</a></p> <p><b>Class 4: ASSESSMENT OF ORAL LANGUAGE.</b> Inter-rater reliability training using holistic scoring rubrics.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 4; Hughes, Chs. 10 &amp; 12</p>
<p>3 7/22/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 5: Class 4: ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTENT AREAS.</b> Assessing content knowledge and the language of the content area. Differentiation in Assessment. Grading. Tips on writing multiple choice questions.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 7 and Ch. 2 (pp. 29-31); Hughes, Chs. 7-8</p> <p><b>Class 6: ASSESSMENT OF READING.</b> Assessing reading comprehension and strategies. Unwrapping the Standards.</p> <p><b>Guest Presenter: Darina Walsh</b></p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 5; Hughes, Ch. 11</p>
<p>4 7/25/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 7: ASSESSMENT OF ELs WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.</b> What does valid &amp; reliable assessment look like?</p> <p><b>Guest Presenter: Becky Miskell</b></p> <p><b>Class 8: SCORING TOOLS.</b> Rubrics, checklists and rating scales.</p>

	<p><b>Readings</b> Handout--Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis &amp; Chappuis (pp. 200-207)</p>
<p>5 7/26/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 9: ASSESSMENT OF WRITING.</b> Issues in writing assessment. Using Anchor papers and rubrics to assess writing. Inter-rater reliability training session using holistic scoring rubrics.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 6; Hughes, Chs. 9 &amp; 13</p> <p><b>Class 10: WORK TIME.</b> Bring drafts of Scaffolding Project and Final Project for peer feedback.</p>
<p>6 7/27/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 11: SELF-ASSESSMENT and PEER ASSESSMENT.</b> The critical relationship between self-assessment &amp; achievement. Self-Assessment Workshop. Validity &amp; reliability revisited.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 6 (pp. 151-160)</p> <p><b>Class 12: WORK TIME.</b> Bring drafts of Scaffolding Project and Final Project for peer feedback.</p>
<p>7 7/28/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 13: HIGH STAKES TESTING.</b> No Child Left Behind and its implications.</p> <p><a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSTzLILQx3c&amp;feature=related">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSTzLILQx3c&amp;feature=related</a></p> <p><b>Class 14: PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT.</b> Sample student portfolios. Portfolio planning workshop.</p> <p><b>Readings</b> O'M &amp; VP, Ch. 3</p>
<p>8 7/29/2011</p>	<p><b>Class 15: SHARE FINAL PROJECTS.</b></p> <p><b>Final Course Evaluation Forms. Materials Release Forms. GMU FAST TRAIN Course evaluations.</b></p> <p><b>DUE today: Scaffolding Project</b> <b>DUE today: Performance-Based Assessment Project</b></p>

The topics listed for each class meeting are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.

**Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)**

***TESOL Professional Standards for  
ESL PreK-12 Teacher Licensure***

**Domain 1: Language**

**Domain 2: Culture**

**Domain 3: Planning, Implementing, & Managing Instruction**

**Domain 4: Assessment**

**Domain 5: Professionalism**

**DOMAIN 4: ASSESSMENT**

Candidates understand issues of assessment and use standards-based assessment measures with ESOL students.

**Standard 4.a. Issues of Assessment for ESL.** Candidates understand various issues of assessment (e.g., cultural and linguistic bias; political, social, and psychological factors) in assessment, IQ, and special education testing (including gifted and talented); the importance of standards; and the difference between language proficiency and other types of assessment (e.g., standardized achievement tests of overall mastery), as they affect ESOL student learning.

**Standard 4.b. Language Proficiency Assessment.** Candidates know and use a variety of standards-based language proficiency instruments to inform their instruction and understand their uses for identification, placement, and demonstration of language growth of ESOL students.

**Standard 4.c. Classroom-Based Assessment for ESL.** Candidates know and use a variety of performance-based assessment tools and techniques to inform instruction.

### **GSE Student Expectations**

- Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode/>].
- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/1301gen.html>].
- Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account.
- Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.

### **Campus Resources**

- The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].

### **Assessment of Course Projects**

In assessing your work, my goals are: to provide you with feedback for improvement, to determine the extent to which you have met the standards and criteria for performance, and to be as fair and objective as possible.

1. I will provide each of you with individual feedback on your projects. This feedback will not only reflect the extent to which you have met the standards for performance but also how you can do better on your next project. The criteria for each project are quite similar. The feedback may include suggestions for improving critical thinking, linking assigned readings to your project, elaborating on implications, or improving writing skills for graduate level work. If you need clarification on my ratings or feedback, let me know.

2. Each graduate student's project will be assessed using the criteria specified in the Scoring Rubric for each project. If you would like to see what other students have produced for each project, please check on Blackboard. To assess each project, I conduct a blind, criterion-

referenced assessment; I do not know the identity of the author of the project I am rating.

I assign a rating on the merits of the project itself as it compares to the criteria specified in the scoring rubric. This is why it is very important that you meet each criterion on the scoring rubric. I will most likely not know your identity until after I have finished reading all projects and begin to record the scores.

### **Grading Scale for FAST TRAIN:**

A+ = 100 4.0

A = 94-98 4.0-3.8

A- = 90-93 3.7-3.4

B+ = 85-89 3.3-3.1

B = 80-84 3.0-2.7

C = 70-79 2.6-2.0 does not meet licensure requirements or Level I award recommendation

F = Does not meet requirements of the Graduate School of Education

Course grades will be calculated by multiplying the rating received for each project by its assigned weight on the syllabus and then tallying the subtotals for a total score. For example, if a student achieves a total score of 3.9– 4.0 (on a 4.0 scale), he/she will receive an A. As or A minuses will be assigned to final scores totaling 3.7 or above. [Pluses (+) and minuses (-) are optional and may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.] Total course scores from 3.0-3.6 will be assigned a B or B plus and scores at 2.6 or below will receive a C. This grading policy is based on past experience using scoring rubrics to assign course grades.

All students will receive an IP or "In Progress" at the conclusion of this course. Students will be required to turn in the required Fieldwork Log, Fieldwork Evaluation Form, and the final assignment (Performance Based Assessment) to the instructor according to the FAST TRAIN Fieldwork Timeline posted here: <http://fasttrain.gmu.edu/current-students/field-req/>

The deadline for posting the PBA to TaskStream and for completing the required fieldwork document in this course is March 15, 2012. Failure to submit this work to the instructor by this deadline will result in an "F" for the course.

### **Incomplete (IN)**

This grade may be given to students who are in good standing, but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. The student must then complete all the requirements by the end of the ninth week of the next semester, not



including summer term, and the instructor must turn in the final grade by the end of the 10th week. Unless an explicit written extension is filed with the Registrar's Office by the faculty deadline, the grade of IN is changed by the registrar to an F. (Mason catalog); Faculty may grant an incomplete with a contract developed by the student with a reasonable time to complete the course at the discretion of the faculty member. The faculty member does not need to allow up to the following semester for the student to complete the course. A copy of the contract will be kept on file in the FAST TRAIN office.

### **Other Assessment Issues**

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is using an author's exact words as they appear in print without using quotation marks and/or without citing the author in your paper. Plagiarism is unethical and illegal and goes against the GMU Honor Code. Evidence of plagiarism will result in a rating of 1 and a note to the Dean's office. Avoid using authors' exact words at all; instead, paraphrase in your own words. Your papers are too short to submit somebody else's words.

**Double dipping:** Projects or papers submitted for credit in one course cannot also be used for a grade in a different course.

### **Attendance Policy**

FAST TRAIN students are expected to attend **ALL** class periods of courses for which they register. In class participation is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as a whole. Class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use absence, tardiness, or early departure as de facto evidence of nonparticipation and as a result, lower the grade as stated in the course syllabus (Mason catalog). Any unexcused absences will result in a .5 deduction in your overall grade (on the 1-4 scale).

### **Technology in Class**

Students will not be permitted to use cell phones during class. Please silence cell phones (not vibrate) while class is in session. Students may not use laptops unless specifically directed by instructor to do so during class.

### **GMU E-mail & Web Policy**

Mason uses electronic mail ([www.gmu.edu/email](http://www.gmu.edu/email)) to provide official information to students. Examples include notices from the library, notices about academic standing, financial aid information, class materials, assignments, questions, and instructor feedback. Students are responsible for the content of university communication sent to their Mason e-mail account and are required to activate that account and check it regularly (Mason catalog).

### **Course Withdrawal with Dean Approval**

For graduate and non-degree students, withdrawal after the last day for dropping a course requires approval by the student's academic dean, and is permitted only for nonacademic reasons that prevent course completion. (Mason catalog). Students must contact an academic advisor in FAST TRAIN to withdraw after the deadline. There is no guarantee that such withdraws will be permitted.

### **Honor Code**

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the university community, have set forth this honor code: **Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work (Mason catalog).**

### **Honor Code: Faculty Responsibilities**

Faculty members have a responsibility for maintaining the integrity of the learning and testing process. They should explain at the beginning of each semester what would be considered an integrity violation in their courses. Special attention should be given to the subject of plagiarism. Faculty members may actively proctor exams in situations that they believe warrant it.

At the beginning of each semester, faculty members have the responsibility of explaining to their classes their policy regarding the Honor Code. They must also explain the extent to which aid, if any, is permitted on academic work.

### **The Professional Development Portfolio**

The Professional Development Portfolio is a collection of carefully selected materials and targeted reflections that provide a record of teaching experiences and growth. It documents a teacher candidate's knowledge, skills, and ability to teach. A performance-based document, the portfolio synthesizes learning from the teacher candidate's coursework and school-based experiences and includes multiple sources of data that should be gathered and developed in the teaching-learning process.

All FAST TRAIN licensure courses have a required Performance-Based Assessment (PBA). The required PBA for this course is the **Classroom-Based Assessment**. This assignment