Introduction

Standard setting is the process of establishing cut scores on a test. When linking to the CEFR, familiarizing panelists with the descriptors most relevant to the test task is an essential part of the process. Specifically, the concept of the just-qualified candidate is important for panelists to understand in order to judge with accuracy the performance of candidates. Familiarizing panelists with the CEFR is essential in this process, as it helps guide panelists through the same process of relating language examinations to the CEFR during the study.

Factors to consider: skills being tested, CEFR levels targeted, descriptor relevance to the CEFR using a recent four-skill linking study as an example.

Step 1: Pre-Study Activity

Purpose: Introduce panelists to the CEFR

Activity Description
- Panelists given an online worksheet a week before the study
- They review several CEFR scales and descriptors
- They describe characteristics of an average and a just-qualified candidate at each level

Activity Outcomes
- Introduce panelists to the relevant CEFR levels
- Get panelists thinking about the boundaries between levels
- Introduce the concept of the just-qualified candidate

Step 2: Descriptor Sorting Activity

Purpose: Tam panelists to distinguish between CEFR levels

Activity Description
- Panelists are provided envelopes which contain a set of decontextualized CEFR descriptors
- They consider each descriptor and sort them by level
- They enter their responses into an online spreadsheet for analysis

Activity Outcomes
- Panelists build a shared understanding of the relevant CEFR levels
- By using decontextualized descriptors, panelists are forced to consider the levels in isolation from each other, and therefore, more effectively distinguish between them

Step 3: Defining the Just-Qualified Candidate

Purpose: Focus panelists in on the key characteristics that define the just-qualified candidate

Prior to the study...

Facilitators create their own just-qualified definitions for each of the levels in question to:
- begin building a shared understanding of test-taker abilities at each boundary
- help guide panelists through the same process

B1 Just Qualified Sample Definition
- Have short, direct conversations on familiar topics
- Can provide brief or simple details about experiences
- Can give explanation and opinions on familiar topics
- Can describe dreams, hopes and ambitions
- Can describe events, real or imagined

During the study...

Activity Description
- Put panelists in small groups
- Ask them to share their pre-study just-qualified definitions and agree on key characteristics
- Ask each group to add to the running list of key characteristics on a whiteboard
- Discuss the newly-formed group definitions among the entire panel

Activity Outcomes
- Definitions are created with buy-in from all panelists
- Panelists have a written just-qualified definition to refer to during the judgement rounds
- Panelists enter the judgement rounds envisioning the just-qualified candidates in a shared way, increasing the likelihood of reaching consensus on cut scores

References


Sustainable Monologue: Describing Experience

B1
- Can describe simple aspects of his/her everyday life in a series of simple sentences, using simple words and basic phrases, provided he/she can prepare in advance.
- Can describe him/herself, his/her family, age, family, using simple words and formulaic expressions, provided he/she can prepare in advance.
- Can say what he/she does and when and where he/she does it.
- Can describe simple experiences and personal feelings.
- Can describe his/her family, what he/she does and where he/she does it.

A2
- "can manage simple, routine exchanges"

B1: "can enter unprepared into a conversation on familiar topics"

Just-Qualified B1: can go just beyond those simple exchanges and begin to converse in a more extended manner

Strategies

✓ Compare descriptors at adjacent levels and read between the lines
✓ Adjusting language in the descriptors

A2: "can manage simple, routine exchanges"

B1: "can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions"

Just-Qualified B1: can provide brief or simple details about experiences and feelings

Selecting the Scales

Factors to consider: skills being tested, CEFR levels targeted, descriptor relevance to test tasks

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Figure 1: Overview of Three-Step Approach to Familiarization

Step 1
Pre-Study Activity

Step 2
Descriptor Sorting Activity

Step 3
Defining the Just-Qualified Candidate

Figure 2: Example Task Type

Task 1
Tell me what you see in the picture and tell a story about it.

Task 2
Tell me about when you played a video game or other type of game.

Task 3
Some people always try to win when playing a game. Others just like to play games for fun. Which do you prefer? Give your opinion and reasons for your answer.

Figure 3: Example CEFR Scale

SUSTAINABLE MONOLOGUE: DESCRIBING EXPERIENCE

B1
- Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and emotions
- Can give explanation and opinions on familiar topics
- Can describe dreams, hopes and ambitions
- Can describe events, real or imagined
- Can describe events, real or imagined

A1
- Can give short, direct conversations on familiar topics
- Can give explanation and opinions on familiar topics
- Can provide brief or simple details about experiences
- Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and emotions
- Can describe dreams, hopes and ambitions

A0
- Can describe him/herself, his/her family, age, family, using simple words and basic phrases, provided he/she can prepare in advance.
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Just-Qualified B1: can go just beyond those simple exchanges and begin to converse in a more extended manner

Figure 4: Example Pre-Study Activity

Figure 5: Example Sorting Activity

Figure 6: Example Discussion Tab

Figure 7: Example Just-Qualified Activity

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References


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