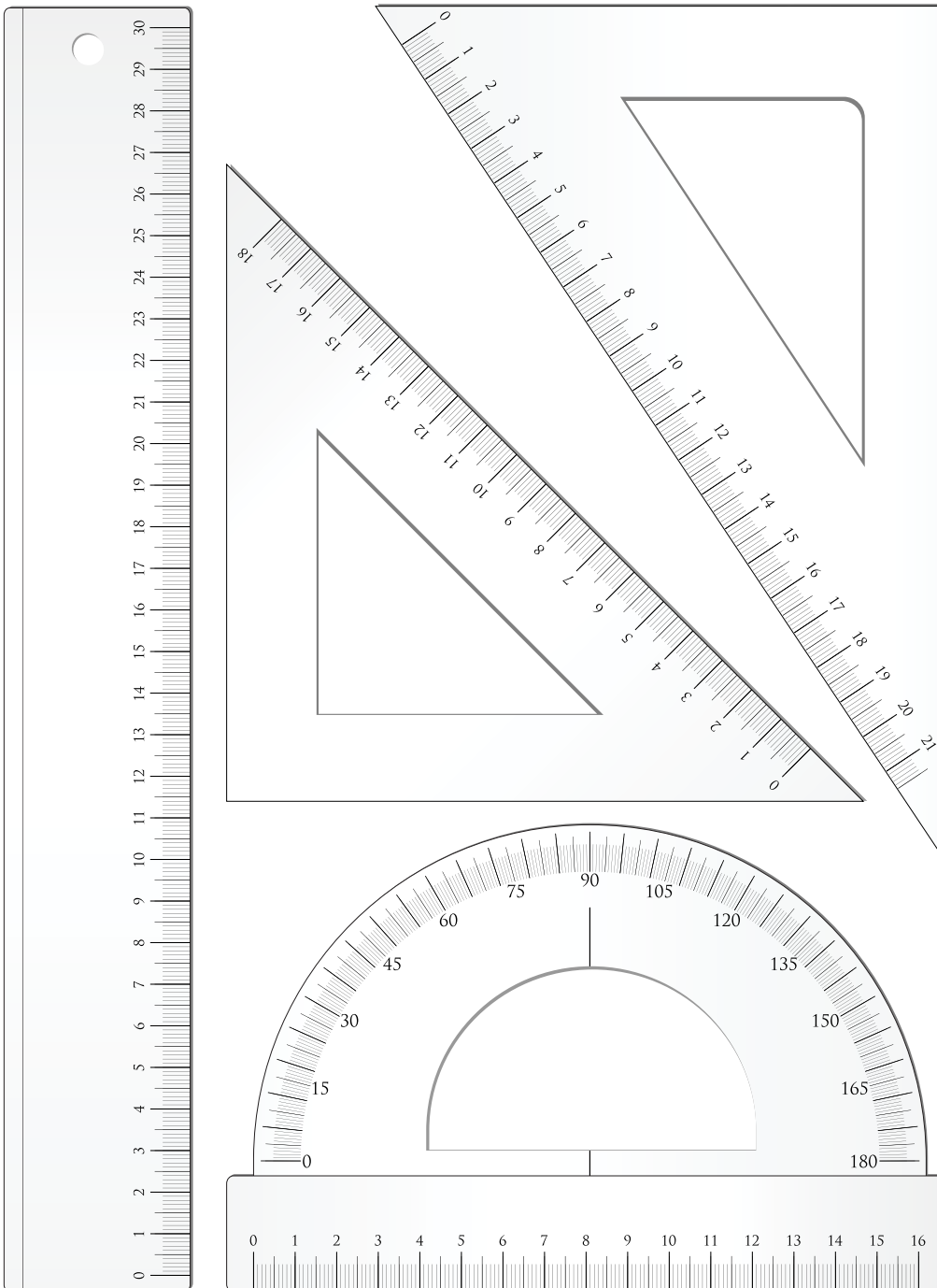


Symposium Reflection #3

Revisiting Assessment Standards Pre- and Post COVID





Dr. Gad Lim, Michigan Language Assessment’s Director of Assessment, was a featured speaker at Michigan Language Assessment’s virtual symposium on October 12-13, 2021. It was attended by 270 higher education professionals from around the country. Here are some key themes that emerged from his session exploring assessment trends, standards and their changes before and after the pandemic.

Host



Dr. Fernando Fleurquin, Director of Marketing, Communications, and Stakeholder Relations, *Michigan Language Assessment*

Featured Speaker



Dr. Gad Lim, Director of Assessment, *Michigan Language Assessment*

Expansion Into Digital Testing

The pandemic temporarily paused standardized testing and accelerated the need for assessment standards to be revisited. Higher education institutions recognize the need for flexibility while maintaining the goal to ensure their international students are equipped with the English language skills to succeed in their studies in the United States. Instead of suspending these standards, experts are reevaluating them. One area of renewed interest and consideration is remote English proficiency exams.

The challenge is double-edged. Administrators don't want to penalize students for issues outside of their control, like the potential for background noise making it difficult to verify the speaking portion of their assessment. However, institutions can't ethically accept inconclusive results from test takers without being able to prove they exceed the assessment standards in place. This is the balancing act with digital exams—accessibility for students vs. assessment standards for institutions. The Michigan English Test recently launched its digital format to meet the accessibility standards test takers expect and the test development, security standards that accepting institutions require.

Ensuring Test Security and Valid Results

Digital English proficiency exams today can be administered remotely from home and at test centers. Many higher education institutions choose to accept digital assessments as long as they are valid, reliable, and secure.

One critical element that impacts test security is how the exam is proctored. Digital exams can rely on human and/or AI-enhanced monitoring. Michigan Language Assessment partnered with Prometric to securely offer MET Digital remotely, relying on human proctors and AI-

enhanced monitoring as well as strict security procedures like comprehensive scans of the physical environment and browser locking. Authorized Test Centers also need to be trained for the new remote administrations. Higher education institutions should continue to enforce high standards when evaluating English test results and ensure that the tests are developed, administered, and scored according to the highest standards.

What This Means for Your Institution

Each institution determines the level of English proficiency that international applicants should reach in order to succeed in their academic studies. To assist with that task, English exams are mapped against the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) or other frameworks to provide a point of reference to compare test results. When determining the different needs in terms of English proficiency and academic skills that international applicants need to meet, it is important to involve all the stakeholders that will be interacting with those students (i.e. admissions, faculty, student services, English language programs, etc.).

As the conversation about assessment standards continues, it's important for institutions to be aware of new trends in English language testing and recruitment practices. Symposia like this provide excellent opportunities for institutions across the U.S. to connect for the benefit of their students and applicants.

The content discussed during Michigan Language Assessment's symposium was compiled into a series of reflective essays. This is the third of five. Check back regularly for updates or watch the full [event recording here](#).

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