BRITISH COUNCIL

Assessment Research Group

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Assessment Research Grants 2023

Call for proposals

The purpose of the Assessment Research Grants is to contribute, in parallel with internal British Council research activities, to innovation in assessment practice, as well as to the validation of Aptis and other British Council language assessment projects.

The research agenda upon which the Grants are premised is based on the modified socio-cognitive validation framework (O'Sullivan & Weir, 2011; O'Sullivan, 2014, Chalhoub-Deville and O'Sullivan, 2020) in particular, on the most recent modifications. The use of alternative validation frameworks that also contribute evidence of the validity of British Council assessments will also be considered. The goal of this research agenda is to build a significant body of substantive evidence of the validity of British Council assessments and contribute to innovation in language assessment development in general.

Projects which are more exploratory in nature and utilise instruments other than Aptis will be considered provided the proposer can demonstrate strong potential for impact in the field of language assessment.

Projects will generally be 12-18 months in duration but, in exceptional circumstances, projects lasting up to 24 months will also be considered.

To apply, please complete the application form available for download on our website and submit at ARAG@britishcouncil.org.

Application deadline is 31 March 2023.

In this document

Who can apply?

Educational institutions and suitably qualified individuals are invited to apply. In order to foster our relationship with partners, we will also encourage applications from test users interested in understanding how British Council tests impact on their institution. Please note that regardless of the geographical location of applicants and regardless of where the actual research will take place, all contracts for research projects issued by the British Council are subject to the laws of England and Wales; this is non-negotiable.

The Principal Investigator must be associated with an educational institution or recognised research organisation, similar in standing to the institutions recognised by UKRI.

Financial support

The Research Grants support researchers around the world in conducting and disseminating the highest quality research.

Financial support for individual projects will, in principle, be limited to a maximum of £25,000, although it is expected that projects requesting financial support in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 will be most positively considered. Please note that projects will be evaluated based on value-for-money in the given context.

Applications for extensive travel or large items of equipment will not be supported. N.B. Applications should NOT at this stage include requests for funding for conference presentations; if completion of the research project results in acceptance of a paper at an international conference, the British Council will consider supporting the attendance of one of the authors through a separate application.

Areas of interest for 2023

The following eight areas are of particular interest to the British Council in 2023:

1. New constructs and task types

- Innovative approaches to the use of technology in discrete skill and integrated task design
- Defining and operationalising plurilingual competences
- Operationalising the construct of mediation
- Multimodal approaches to integrated skills assessment

2. Test production infrastructure

- Innovative approaches to item production, pretesting, item banking, calibration and quality assurance (possibly using simulation and AI)

3. Stakeholder engagement and impact

- Methods of feedback at group and / or individual level*
- Qualitative perceptions of tests by different stakeholders
- EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) in language testing and assessment
- Stakeholder communications
- Test impact on a range of stakeholders
- Test washback

*British Council has a feedback framework related to Aptis and investigations relating to the framework and its feasibility would be welcome. Access to the framework can be provided for the purposes of such a project further to signing a Non-Disclosure Agreement.

4. Socio-cognitive model

- Applying the latest iteration of the socio-cognitive model (Chalhoub-Deville and O'Sullivan, 2020) to different contexts of use

5. Remote proctoring

- Implications of remote invigilation for online assessments (e.g. on test taker anxiety, security, accessibility, etc.)
- Evaluations of different remote proctoring models

6. Corpus-based approaches to test validation

- We invite proposals that seek to make use of the British Council Lancaster Aptis Corpus. This is the Aptis spoken corpus of test-taker responses elicited through the Aptis speaking test.

- If you are planning to submit a proposal making use of the corpus, please first register your interest with us at ARAG@britishcouncil.org for more details.

7. Knowledge-Based Vocabulary Lists (KVL)

- Potential applications for the KVL (Schmitt, Dunn, O'Sullivan, Anthony, & Kremmel, 2022) in a range of contexts, e.g., test development, language teaching, materials creation, syllabus design. For more information on the KVL, see: https://www.britishcouncil.org/exam/aptis/research/knowledge-based-vocabulary-lists-kvl

8. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

- Research exploring how the pragmatic competence scales in the CEFR companion volume can be operationalised in test tasks, focusing on task design and scoring.

Consideration will also be given to other issues of current interest in the fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition in relation to language assessment.

Key dates

February-March 2023	Call for proposals
31 March 2023	Applications close
April 2023	Preliminary review of applications
May 2023	Evaluation and selection
30 June 2023	Notification of decisions to applicants
July-August 2023	Drawing up and signing of contracts
1 September 2023	Project start We are assuming and working towards a project start date of 1 September, however this will be subject to the completion of administrative processes, incl. the signing of a Research Services contract.