



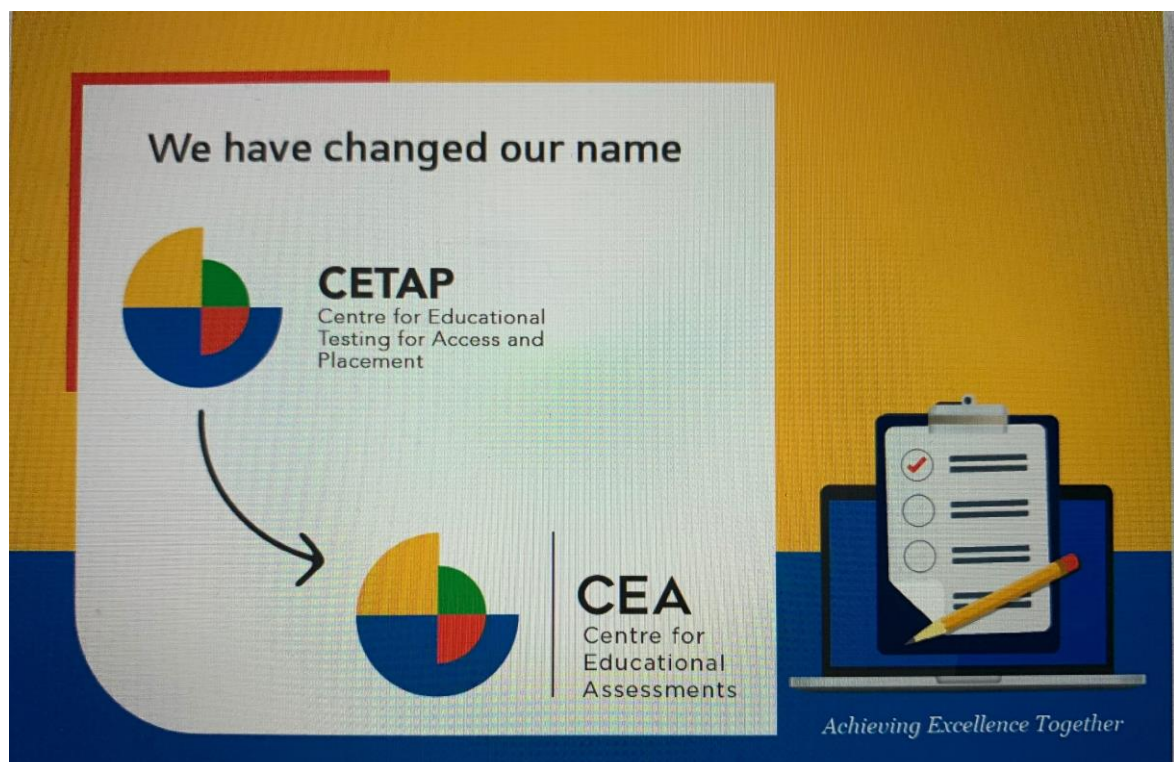
From the Director's Desk

I am excited to announce the launch of the first CEA newsletter. Our vision is to be recognized the premier assessment center in Africa that focuses on student success.

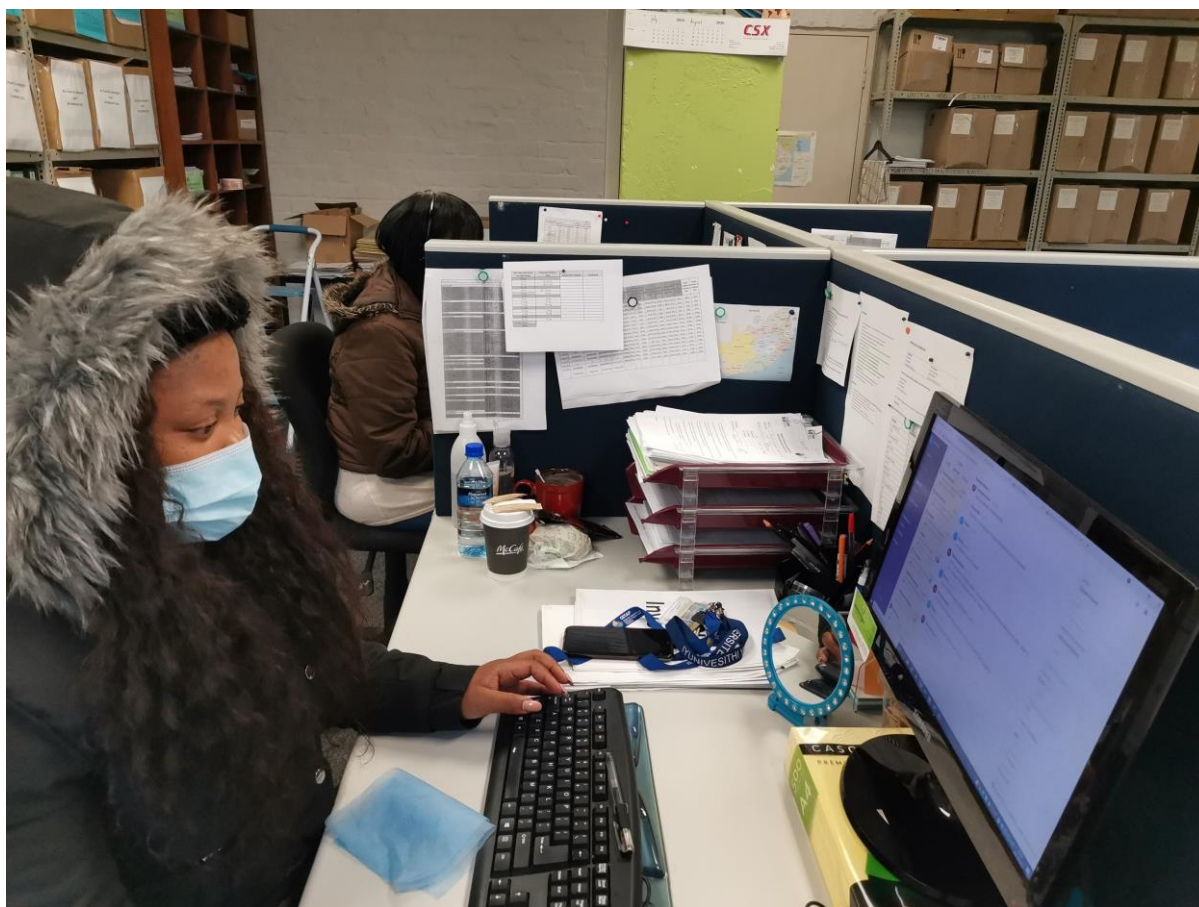
The Corona virus pandemic has placed many challenges for the pencil and paper test, but the staff of CEA were committed to move to online testing. Their expertise gave a push the right direction that enabled many students to write the NBT from the comfort of their homes with all the security measures in place. This was driven by integrity, transparency and ethical behavior are the core values of CEA. Our long-term success requires a total commitment to exceptional standards of performance and productivity, to working together effectively, and a willingness to embrace new ideas and learn continuously.

I welcome you to explore the great and exciting opportunities that CEA offers on our newly constructed website and social media pages.

Naziema Jappie



Featured articles: NBT Online



Support for NBT Online

The Centre for Educational Assessments (CEA) conducted the first online NBT in 2022 and the online assessment is ongoing for the 2022 intake. The online platform delivered online testing with integrity using remote invigilation, instant messaging and ensure that there is no cheating. The team provide remote invigilation which is an integral part of the online assessments. The team is trained and understand the system, which means a professional and helpful invigilator service is always provided to candidate writing the NBT Online.

Online proctoring

With Online proctoring, always the team is connected to the candidate by video, remote screen share and instant messaging, and everything is recorded and can be reviewed later by the logistic team. Before the test begins, the candidate is authenticated, then steps are taken to check and secure the exam environment. Candidates are always monitored during the assessment and any exceptional circumstances that arise are reported in full.

National Benchmark Test

CEA has begun the year with an over-arching assessment of the South African National Benchmark Tests (NBT). The registration for 2022 intake opened on the 1st of April 2021.

For 2021, 15 testing sessions have been scheduled. The sessions are divided into 10 Pencil and Paper testing and 5 Online testing. for the period April – August 2021, 10 sessions have been conducted: 5 online on (5 and 26 June, 18 July; 14 & 21 August 2021) and 5 pencil and paper (12 and 19 June; 7,14, and 28 August 2021).

Registration are still open for writers who wish to writethe NBT for the next coming sessions and more information can be found at the NBT website: www.nbt.ac.za

Featured articles: Woman's Month Celebration

The Centre for Educational Assessments established Women's Month Celebration by profiling women in our department where they share stories and the journey in the field of work. We are celebrating women of our time and create a keepsake for the young and upcoming female in Educational Assessments.



I am

Sanet Steyn

“I would love to see more women in my field because I feel we have important contributions to make”

I am the Academic Literacy Research Lead at the Centre for Educational Assessments (CEA) and I am responsible for the development and refinement of Academic Literacy tests – such as the AL component of the NBT AQL – and in other CEA collaborative project. I take the lead on the components relating to the assessment of language competency or proficiency. I am also the course convenor of a course on Assessment and Evaluation Practice in Higher Education, an elective course offered in the Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Studies programme.

I was born and raised in Bloemfontein, I completed a MA in Applied Linguistics: TEFL at the University of Groningen in 2014 and another master's degree, a MA in English at the University of the Free State in 2018. I am hoping to register for a PhD at UCT later this year.

I got into this career because

I am passionate about education and believe academic literacy skills play a crucial role in academic success. My transition into this field happened quite accidentally. In my third year, one of my lecturers told us a little bit about the research he was doing, and this sparked my interest in assessment and curriculum design. This lecturer, Prof. Albert Weideman became my supervisor and mentor. As an applied linguist, I get to work not only on the assessment of language skills and competencies – such as academic literacy – but also in the development of resource materials and curricula, a lot of interdisciplinary research and sometimes even in discussions regarding policy change.

A typical “day in my work life”

I start the day with some admin and then move on to work related to the development and refinement of our assessment instruments and other CEA projects or preparation for my teaching. Then, when I am done with those things for the day, I put on the “researcher” hat and work on the various research projects I am involved in.

What I love most about my field is

that I can see the potential impact our work can have in helping students reach their potential or helping colleagues understand the needs of our students.

One thing this industry/fields needs more of is

more awareness of the relevance of academic literacy in each discipline – whether they identify as belonging to the “hard” or the “soft” sciences.

One thing people don't realise (myth/surprised to learn) about my career field is

that the development of academic literacy skills is relevant across all disciplines and that there are things our subject specialists in the various fields of study offered at HE level can do to help facilitate this.

My biggest goal/dream is to create a place within the curriculums taught at all the levels of primary and secondary education for the development of advanced language abilities and specifically the skills we deem to be the precursors to academic literacy skills. Whether this happens through additional training for teachers, the development of materials or even through policy change, I hope that we can start paying attention to these skills earlier a student's academic career.

One of the biggest career highlights for me in the short time that I have been in this field has been the opportunities I have had to interact with some of the experts whose work I've been studying since I was an undergraduate student. I would say my biggest achievement thus far was when I was awarded an Erasmus Mundus scholarship to study in the Netherlands.

I am also proud of the chapter I contributed to a book that was recently published. The book is about the assessment of academic literacy in multilingual contexts and my chapter discusses parity between parallel assessment instruments designed for multilingual administration.

I am most passionate about the need for curricula to be responsive to student needs. The best thing we can do for our students as educators in the Higher Education sector is to make sure that they have access to appropriate support.

One of the biggest challenges for me, as a women in this field, is finding time for everything and as a single woman I can just imagine how much harder it is to find time when you are trying to balance your work life with having a family.

I would love to see more women in my field because I feel we have important contributions to make. A lot of the research we do in this field recognizes the impact of a person's context and perspective. Naturally, diversity in the ranks of the academics doing this type of research is very important.

We need more women in this field because most of the prominent voices and the authors of many of the seminal works in the field are men. It is up to us to make sure that our work enjoys the same prominence.

One way I think women can help each other more is build networks of female colleagues that can mentor and guide each other or just provide a space where we can use each other as sounding boards.

One way business and corporates can help women in this field is to support their research and work in this field by investing where relevant or providing funding for women to study in this field. Particularly in the professions here there are external bodies or councils that regulate its members, acknowledging the role that language competency and/or academic literacy plays in completing the necessary qualifications would be a huge step forward.



One gender bias/hurdle I overcame was letting go of my own preconceived notions about how others would see me or what their expectations would be because I am a young woman in academia.

One thing I wish I knew when I started was that you need to try to ensure that you have a good work/life balance – it does not happen on its own. I am still trying to learn how to navigate this.

I believe mentorship is not only a crucial part of the development of the mentee, but also essential to ensure that the mentor keeps learning and growing about their field and their colleagues.

My advice for women wanting to enter this field is to make sure your voice is heard and to not be scared to share your own experiences and challenges with others. In a field where individual differences and external influences are recognized for the impact they have on your ability to learn, sharing helps us learn from each other and hopefully helps inform the way we support our students.

If I'm not working, I love reading, singing, and playing the viola. I also enjoy painting, sketching, and learning new languages. I keep my Dutch fluent by chatting to my Dutch friends regularly, I listen to French music to keep my French skills going, and I plan on enrolling for courses in IsiXhosa and German soon.



Congratulations to Robert Prince and Sanet Steyn on their recent publications about the NBTs in
Vol. 35 No.3 (2021)

of the **South Africa Journal of Higher Education**: “Academic and quantitative literacy in
higher education: Relationship with cognate school-leaving subjects”

<https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/article/view/3943>

Abstract

Academic and quantitative literacies (AQL) are essential to success in higher education. These literacies are largely not explicitly taught, but acquired indirectly, mostly through practices in various school subjects. The National Benchmark Tests (NBT) Project assesses students' AQL competencies to assist in identifying students who need support, with placement into appropriate programmes and with curriculum development. We analyse the performance on the NBT AQL test of students who took the school-leaving examinations in Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, English Home Language and English First Additional Language. We use the subject choice as a representation of the level of a candidate's quantitative competence and language proficiency respectively, and investigate the relative contributions made by these subject choices to a student's AQL. Students who paired Mathematics with English as Home Language subject had the statistically significant highest mean AQL score and those who took both English First Additional Language and Mathematical Literacy had the lowest. Language competence has a stronger effect than mathematical competence on AQL. Students who took the subject combination Mathematics and English Home Language at school are better prepared for the academic demands of higher education than their counterparts who took the alternate subjects. Treating these subjects as equivalent to English Home Language and Mathematics for admissions purposes ignores the differences in preparedness of these students



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