

# Performance-based testing: Contributing to test validity through Continuous Professional Development

A decorative background graphic consisting of interlocking puzzle pieces in shades of yellow, red, and pink, arranged in a diagonal pattern across the lower half of the slide.

*Sheryl Cooke  
Paul Robinson  
British Council, China  
13 October 2016*

# The Context



- 350
- Contracted employees
- Mostly IELTS examining
- 4 centres across China

# Performance-based Testing



- ✓ Communicative
- ✓ Interaction
- ✓ Level of authenticity
- ✓ Reflects construct



- ❖ Rater reliability
- ❖ Standardisation
- ❖ Practicality
- ❖ Other issues



- Targeted, regular training
- Score reliability checks, double-marking systems
- Performance monitoring



Limited  
Narrow

# Should this be taken further?

*Is Continuous Professional Development  
necessary for language assessors?*

Yes



# The Validity Argument

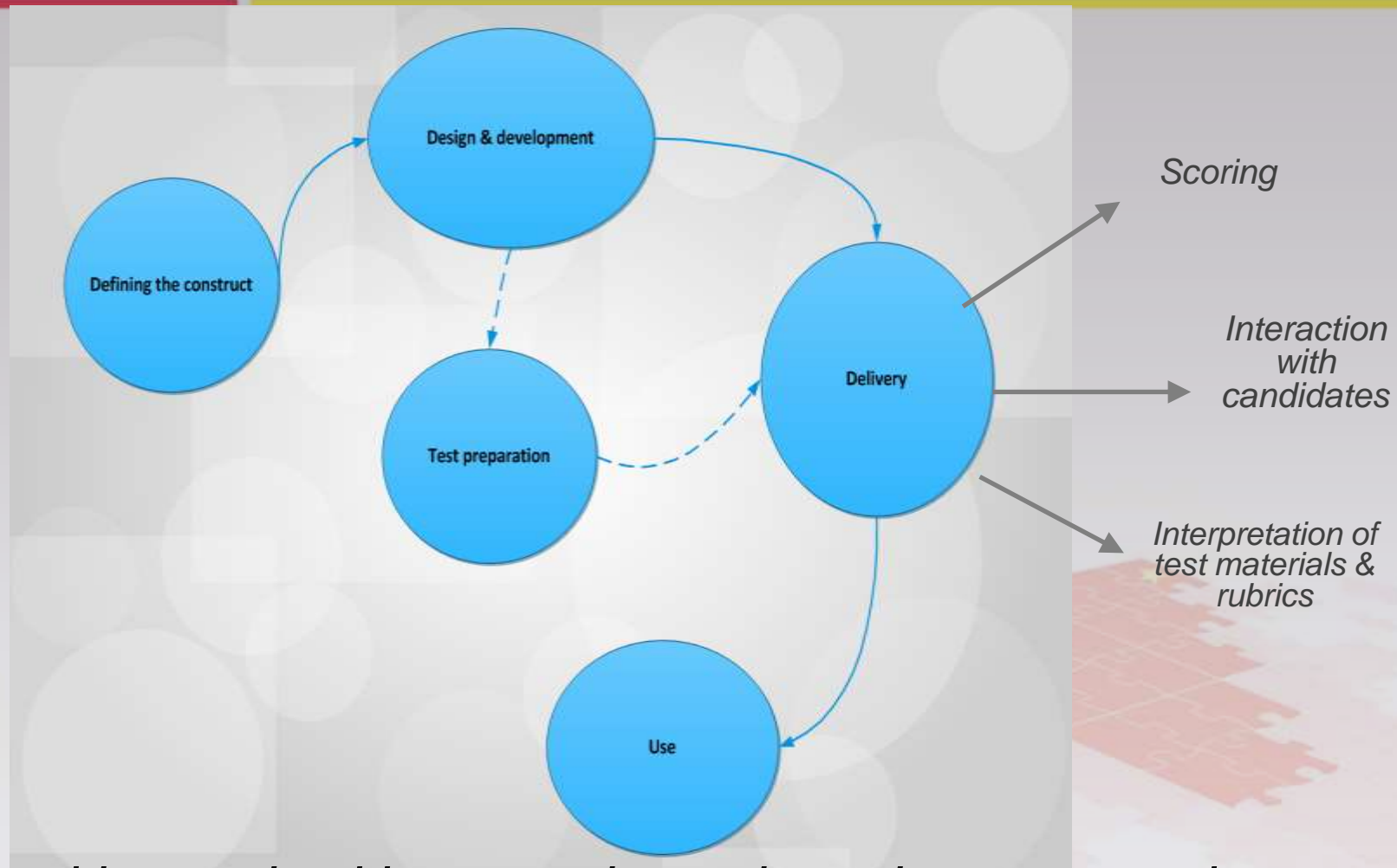
- Score interpretation is built on a chain of inferences.
- The validity of this interpretation is only as strong as the weakest link in the chain.
- Language Assessors are one of the key links in this chain.



Kane, M. (2012). Articulating a validity argument. In G. Fulcher & F. Davidson (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Testing* (pp. 34–47). Oxford and New York: Routledge.

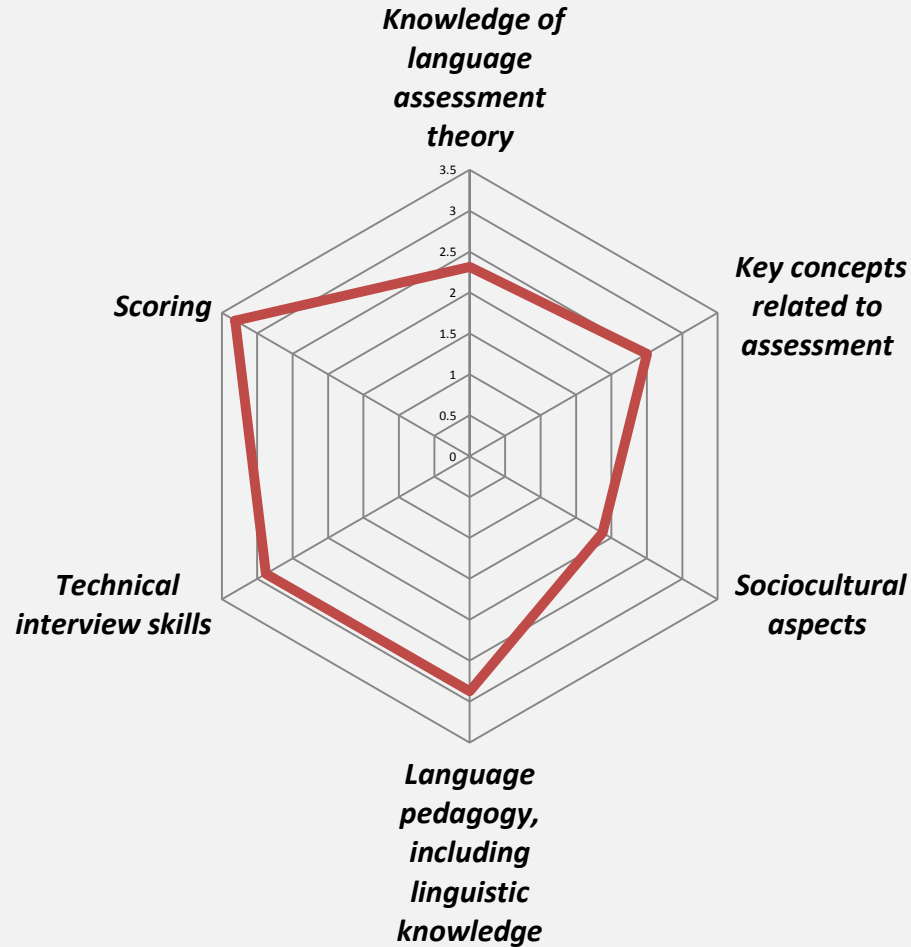


# Language Assessors & Validity

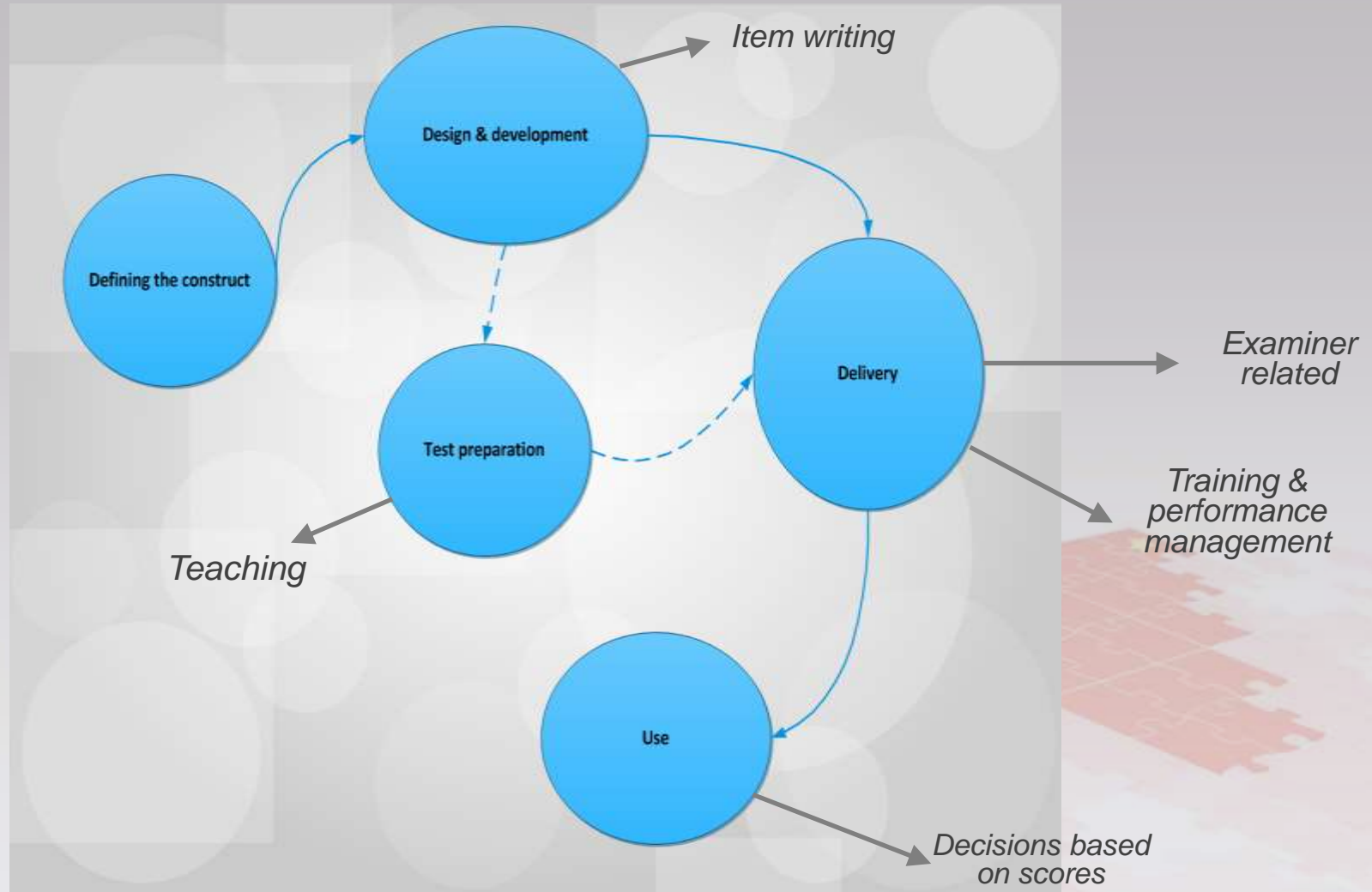


*As speaking and writing examiners, how do you come into contact with the test?*

# Assessment Literacy Profile for Language Assessors



# The Wider Impact





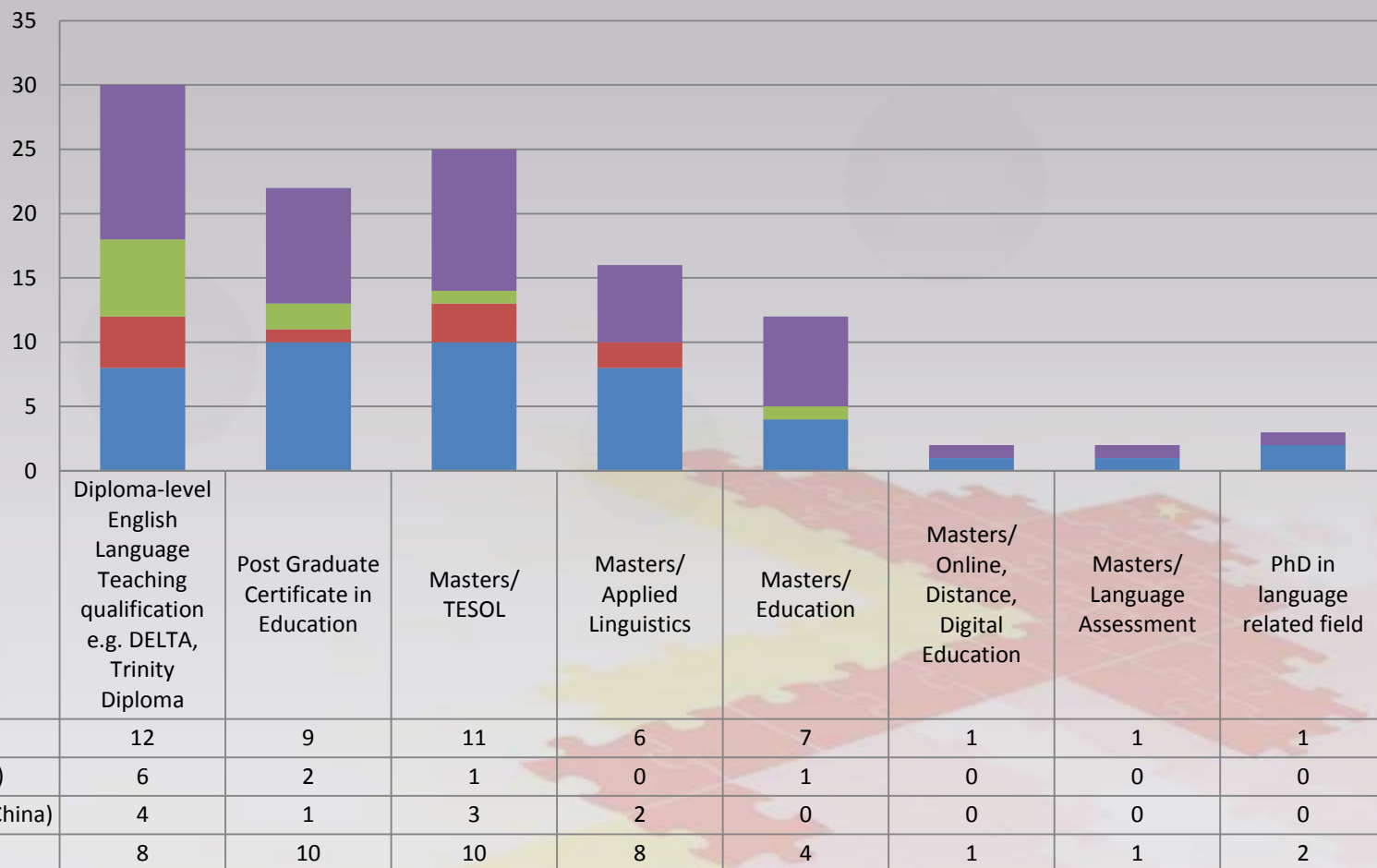
# The Group

---

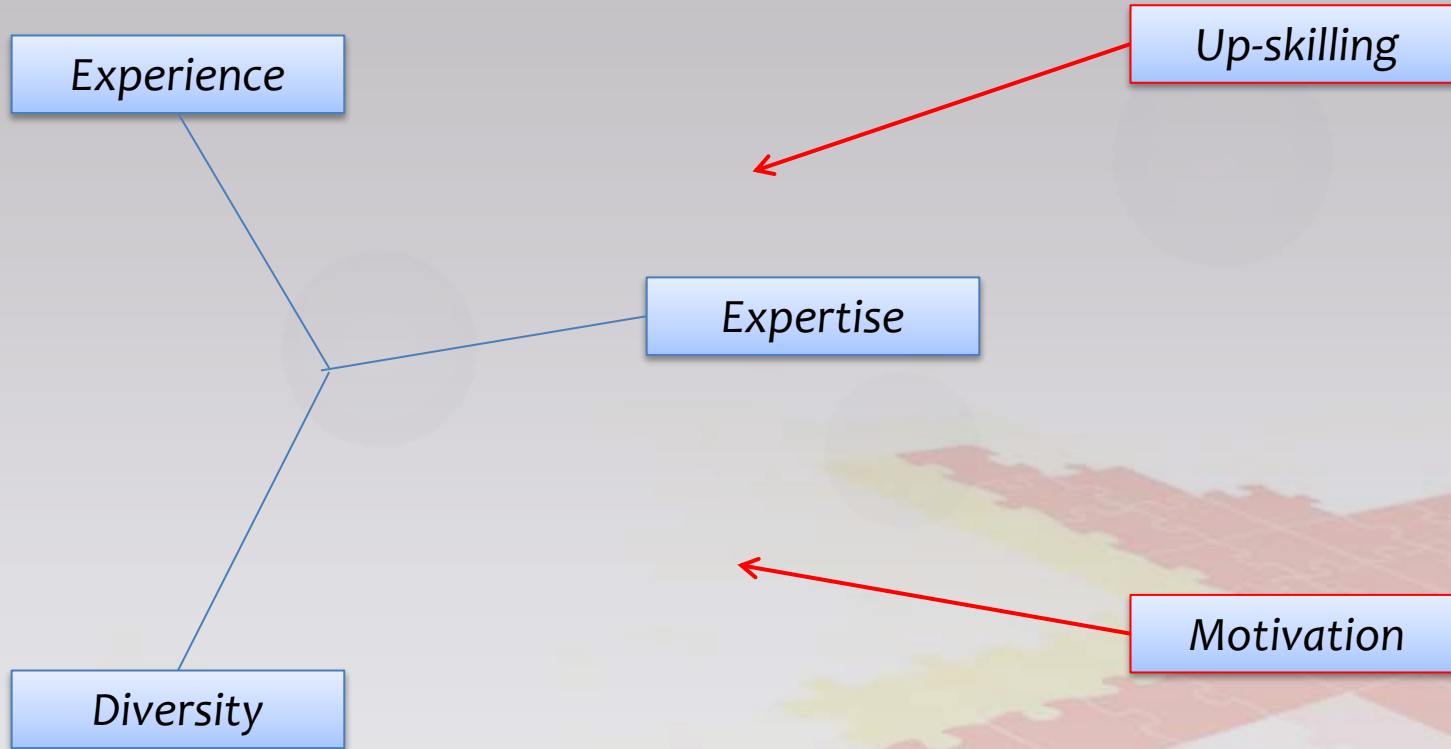
- Our examiners have taught ESP courses in over 30 different fields, including English for Philosophers & Aero-scientists
- 18 examiners report themselves as CEFR B2 and above in Chinese
- Our examiners have worked as sub-editors for the Observer, in UK local government, in the fashion industry or on cruise ships

# The Group - Qualifications

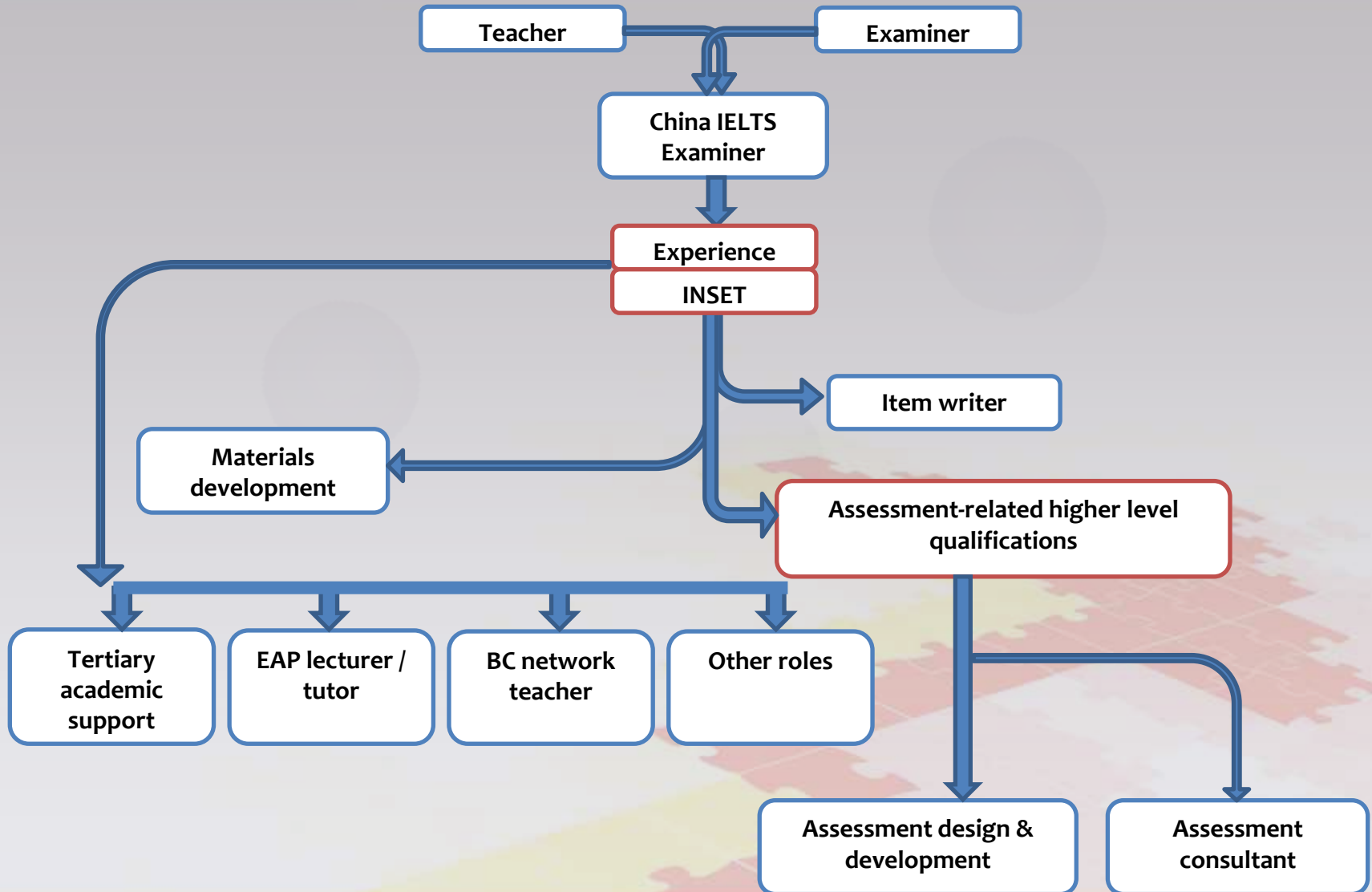
Number of examiners (n = 138)



# The Programme



# Possible Career Paths



# Courses & Training

---

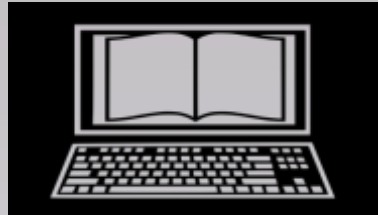
- Development support from an experienced Team Leader
- Examiner trainer led workshops & focus groups
- Online Chinese language learning
- British Council CPD online courses
- British Council Learning Portal
- Access to research grants
- Programmed leave for teaching on Summer Schools
- Opportunity to train as a Senior Examiner / Team Leader
- Conference presentation & attendance
- Conference skills workshops
- A range of online Testing & Assessment methodology courses
- Opportunities to train on induction and inset programmes
- Materials writer opportunities
- Opportunities to work as an Educational Consultant
- Item writer training
- Assessment research specialist
- Assessment Solutions Consultant
- Funding for PhD and master study
- Two core days allocated to PD per year
- Context Specific Academic Management course



# Diverse Roles



**900+** Chinese teachers & researchers engaged in Aptis, IELTS & Assessment Literacy



**539** Online pages proofread & content edited for “Road to IELTS” website



**12+** Articles written for assessment community



**4** Statistical analyses carried out on reliability issues



**300+** Interviews for conducted for CLAs



**16** IELTS Life Skills, GT & Academic practise tests developed

# Conclusions & Questions

---

CPD *can* contribute to validity

- in their current examiner roles
- up-skilling, expertise for future roles

Is there increased motivation?

Does a motivated assessor contribute to validity?

# Questions

---

?

[sheryl.cooke@britishcouncil.org.cn](mailto:sheryl.cooke@britishcouncil.org.cn)  
[paul.robison@britishcouncil.org.cn](mailto:paul.robison@britishcouncil.org.cn)



**THANK YOU**