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## ACER signs multi million dollar UAE test development contract

ACER has signed a multi million dollar deal to develop aptitude testing for higher education selection in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

A Memorandum of Understanding between ACER and the UAE Ministry of Education and Youth was officially signed in Dubai on 7 July when ACER's Research Director, System and School Testing, Professor Jim Tognolini met with the Minister for Education and Youth, H.E. Dr. Ali Abdul Aziz Al Sharhan.

ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said the project would involve staff from ACER working collaboratively with the Ministry to develop a new approach to university selection for the UAE.

"It will build on ACER's considerable experience in the development of aptitude and selection testing programs," he said.

The project will commence in September 2004 and the first administration of the new test will take place in 2008.

Professor Masters said ACER had faced major competition from much larger US companies for the contract.

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The contract is the second that ACER is undertaking in the UAE. ACER is also working with the UAE Ministry's Centre for Educational Measurement and Evaluation (CETME) for the development and implementation of the National Assessment of Student Achievement and Progress (NASAP). Work has recently commenced on a contract for the second cycle of NASAP.

In addition, a new program of Maths and English assessments for private schools will commence in November with schools across the Gulf region taking part.

ACER opened an office in Dubai in March 2004 to facilitate its business dealings in the Middle East region.

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## Meeting the challenge of assessing behavioural problems

Assessment of behavioural, social and emotional problems faces several challenges, according to Professor Thomas Achenbach, from the University of Vermont, USA.

Professor Achenbach was a keynote speaker at the International Test Users' Conference 2004 hosted by ACER in Melbourne on 19-20 July. He is the author of the Child Behaviour Checklist.

One of the challenges in assessing behavioural, social and emotional problems is the different responses from various sources of data. In some situations, such as the assessment of children and older adults, other family members, carers and clinicians are also asked to report on that person's behaviour. Responses from different people can vary: a child's mother, father and teacher may all make different observations about a child's behaviour, and this may also vary from information gathered from the child. The key is to combine this data to form a cohesive and accurate picture of the child's behaviour.

Cultural differences are also an issue in many countries, where the need arises to provide educational, mental health and social services for refugees and immigrants.

"Differences in language, culture, socioeconomic status, education, values, and expectations challenge traditional assessment practices," Professor Achenbach said.

In meeting these challenges, the Achenbach System of Empirically Based Assessment (ASEBA) systematically compares problems reported by the person being assessed and people who know the person to reveal similarities and differences and measure the extent to which their responses agree. The ASEBA instruments have been translated into 69 languages to overcome some of the cultural challenges practitioners face.

Further information about Professor Achenbach's presentation can be found in the Conference Proceedings.

Media releases regarding other conference presentations can be found in Media Release Archive.

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## ACER UPDATE

### **International Test Users Conference proceedings**

World leaders in the assessment of intelligence, emotions and behaviour gathered in Melbourne this week to consider issues in assessing the whole person across the lifespan. They joined around 180 delegates including participants from the United States, Malaysia, Indonesia and New Zealand taking part in the International Test Users' Conference 2004 hosted by ACER. Keynote presentations were given by Professor Gale Roid, co-author of the Stanford Binet 5; Professor Thomas Achenbach, author of the Child Behaviour Checklist; Dr David Caruso, co-author of the Mayar, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test; and Dr Katherine Hirsch, co-author of a number of texts on the Myers Briggs Type Indicator.

[Download Conference Proceedings](#)

### **Workload in New Zealand secondary schools**

The New Zealand Ministry of Education has contracted ACER to investigate the nature and patterns of workload in secondary schools and explore practical and innovative ways to manage workload more effectively in the future.

### **Cunningham Library project**

ACER's Cunningham Library has been contracted by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) of the Victorian Department of Education and Training to conduct a short-term project. The project involves the development of a controlled vocabulary structure for the web site of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework.

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## ACER Press title short-listed for award

*Crisis Management and the School Community*, edited by Mardie Whitla and published by ACER Press has been short-listed for The Australian Awards for Excellence in Educational Publishing in the teacher reference section. Winners will be announced at a presentation lunch on 6 August.

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