

# High Stakes EAP Assessment: Enabling Useful Score Inferences

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# Questions

- What do score users want?
  - Challenges
- What does a student need to be able to do at College/University?
- How should this be represented in an EAP assessment?
  - Some answers and some more questions

# What do score users want?

	Test Taker	Teacher	College/ University administrator
Fast results	✓	✓	
Fraud prevention			✓
Score verification			✓
Diagnostic feedback	✓	✓	
Beneficial study outcomes	✓	✓	✓

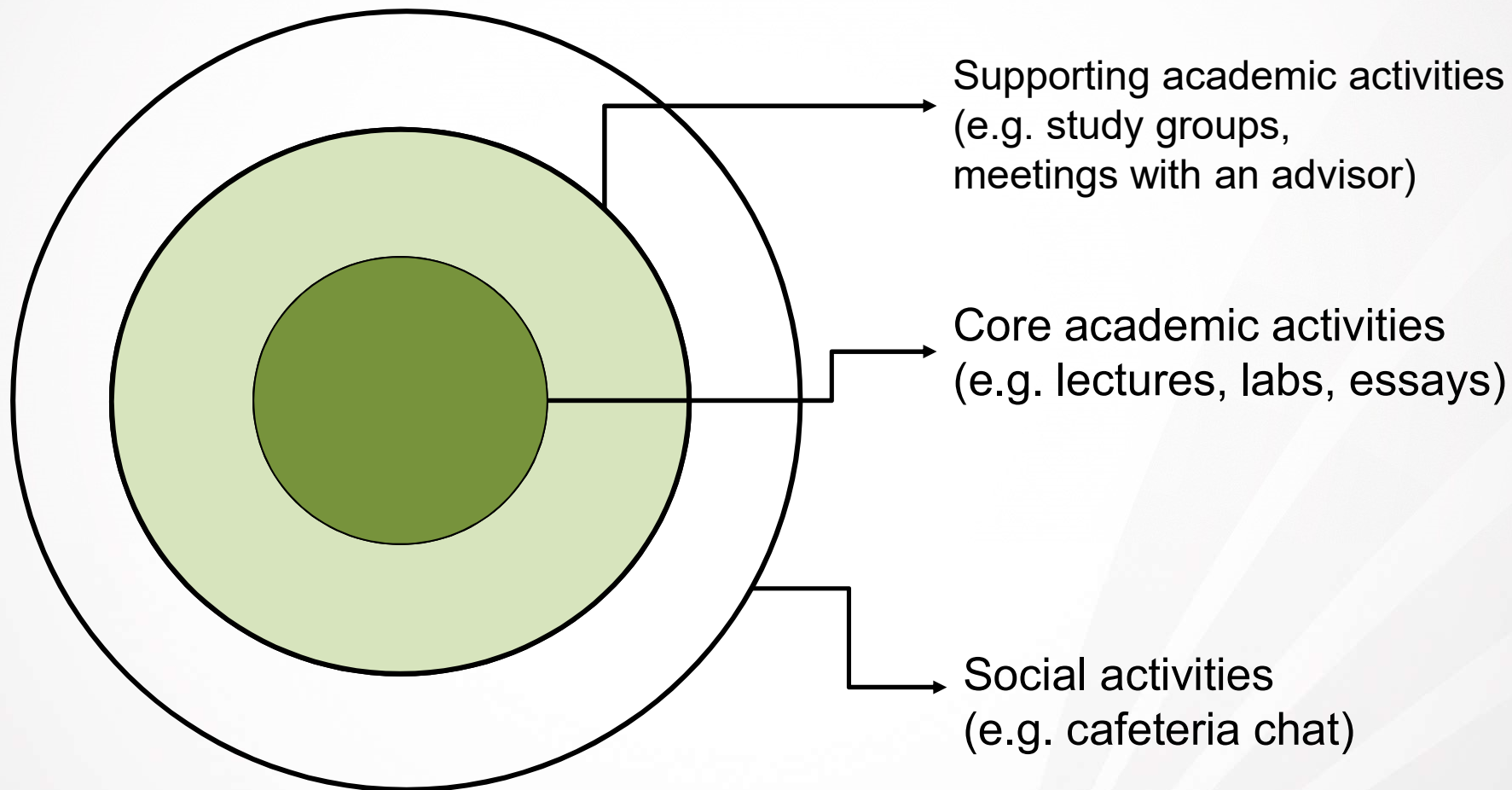
# Enabling Useful Score Inferences

- Challenges

- Language is important for learning but it is not the only factor.
- Language proficiency tests assess language. University courses assess understanding of subject matter.
- Language proficiency is typically measured before students begin their studies but academic grades are finalized at the end of a semester or year.
- Correlations between language test scores and academic performance (as measured by GPA) tend to be low e.g.  $r = .33$

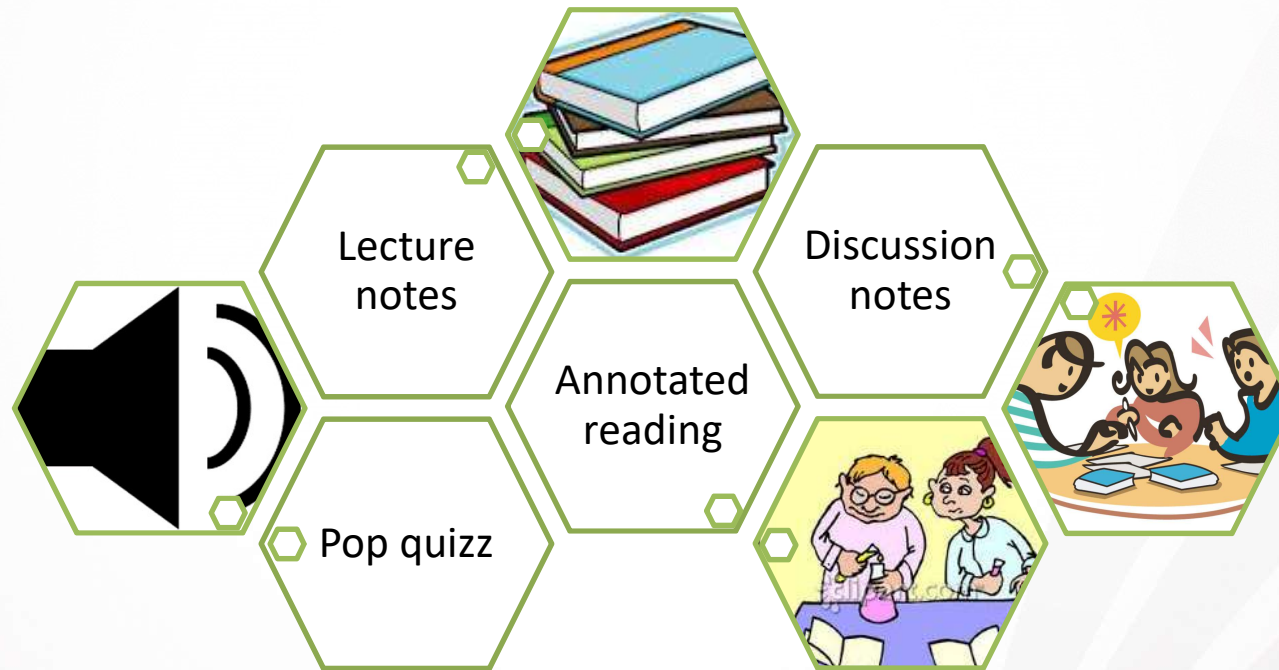
(Banerjee, 2003; Cho & Bridgeman, 2012)

# Contexts of Language Use In College/University



# Multimodal Nature of College/University Study

- Typical study week (for one course)



# Language-enabled activities in College/University

Activities	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
Understand extended talk on a complex topic (lectures)		✓		
Read 10 – 20 pages of text (textbooks/ journal articles)	✓			
Ask questions				✓
Make presentations	✓	✓		✓
Write essays	✓	✓	✓	
Take quizzes and exams	✓	✓	✓	

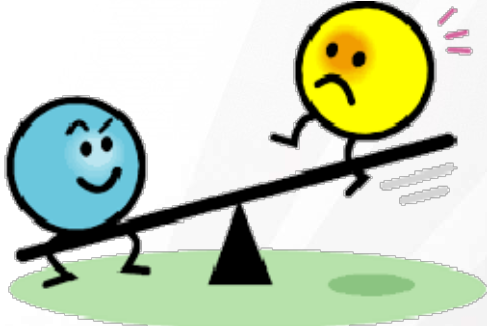
# Assessment activities in College/University

Activity	% final grade
Exams	44
Tests   Quizzes	16
Assignments	12
Essays   Reports	11
Individual/Group presentations	4
Lab work	4
Attendance   Participation	3
Other (e.g. studio work, peer review and critique)	6

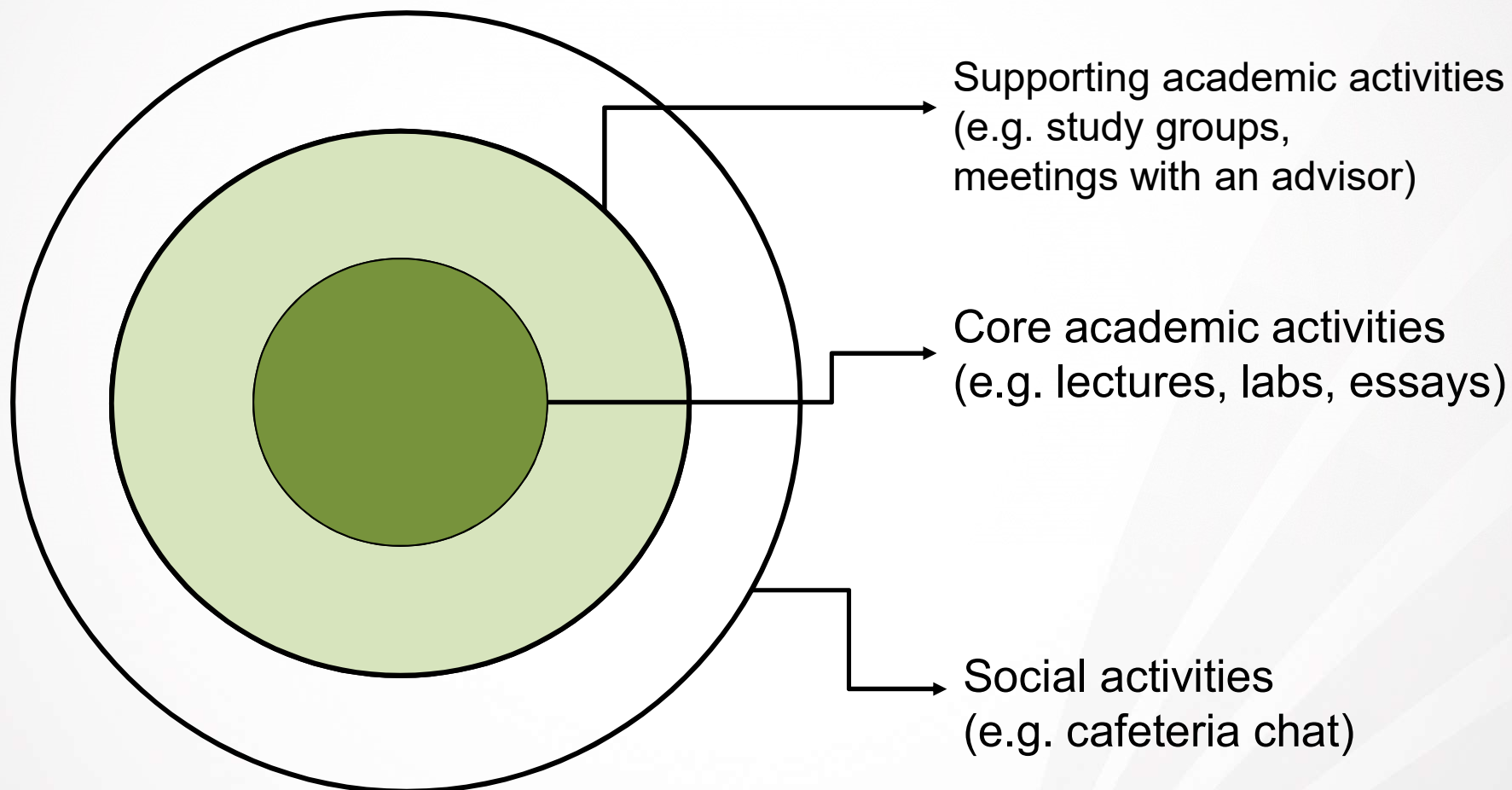
(Paragon Testing Enterprises, 2015)



# Enabling Useful Score Inferences

Construct representativeness	Practicality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What university activities should the test capture? What is essential to represent the target language use domain?</li><li>• How closely should the test replicate the activities?</li><li>• What language varieties/accents should it include?</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How long can the test be?</li><li>• How should the test be delivered?</li></ul> 

# Contexts Represented in High-Stakes EAP Tests



# CAEL Assessment

## Target Language Use Domain

“ability to *use* English as it is used in Canadian universities and colleges. It allows test takers to experience what it is like to participate in a Canadian post-secondary classroom”  
- CAEL Assessment Testing Office

# Levels of Integration

- Tasks reflect core academic activities (lectures, reading, essays, quizzes)
- Topics are taken from first-year university curriculum (e.g. ecology | forestry)
- Test takers have to incorporate what they have learned from their reading and the lecture to write their essay

(Choi, 2016)

# Language assessment is:



The art of compromise

&

A constant source  
of new questions



# Current Investigations

- Use of PowerPoint Slides
  - Ubiquitous in post-secondary teaching contexts
  - Relatively scant research
  - 68 lectures | social sciences and engineering
  - Multimodal analysis (frequency and types of visuals | relationship between text and visuals)
  - Corpus-based analysis (lexical and syntactic complexity)

# Current Investigations

- Assessing speaking: the perspectives of university instructors and experienced raters
  - 5 experienced ESL raters | 3 university instructors
  - 50 speech samples
  - Each rater evaluated 20 samples (x-matched dataset) | provided a score and a justification for that score
  - Task completion prioritized by the university instructors

# Questions? Comments?



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