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## COLLECTING EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF CONSTRUCT-RELATED VALIDITY

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One category of evidence for validity, that of construct-related evidence, is particularly critical to tests of writing skills in which readers assign scores to papers written by examinees. Because the direct assessment of writing relies on human judgments, its quality greatly depends on the validity of the perceptions invoked by individuals when making these judgments. Thus it is essential to focus on the *process* evaluation—a creative act of interpretation that is influenced not only by the perceptions of readers but also by the perceptions of the various audiences involved in the assessment.

The construct of writing competence must be described and defined within the context of a specific assessment. Furthermore, since readers are expected to apply that construct objectively and systematically in a testing situation, evidence must be collected to support inferences that the intended construct actually is being applied—by readers as well as persons who interpret and use test results.

Attention must be directed, not only to the mechanisms necessary for the implementation of the program, but also to the construct that is being

measured, and to how effectively it is actualized throughout all components of the program. This definition should be articulated at the inception of the program, in interaction with designers, writers, evaluators, instructors, and interpreters. Subsequently, they develop and refine this definition while the program is being designed, and examine it continuously during the evaluation of compositions, when they interpret and use the results, and when they realize the consequences.

Validity is not an issue that is reserved for investigation after the results are in, or only for experts in measurement and statistics. The demonstration of validity is a creative endeavor in which those who understand writing and the writing process are responsible for collecting evidence from as many different sources as possible to support inferences that a particular writing assessment is valid.