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**Local institution, global examination, synergies and tensions in a process of co-certification**

This paper will examine the tensions and synergies involved in the development of a *co-certification*, in which a higher education institution (The University of Venice) joined forces with an international testing agency (Trinity College London) to adapt an existing exam suite (Trinity ISE), making it more suitable for university students majoring in foreign languages.

Although external certification as an alternative to in-house exams in Italian universities was made possible in a 2001 protocol, and gratefully adopted in non-language faculties, there was resistance to the idea in language faculties, which reserved the right to produce their own (usually traditional) forms of assessment. In Venice, however, it was believed that a test with both internal and external value, if it reflected the needs and profiles of students, could pay high dividends in terms of washback.

The ongoing project, begun in 2004 at C1 level, and recently extended to B2, presented a number of challenges. These included the need to clarify the role of each partner in the assessment process, the need to agree about underlying constructs, the disparity between existing faculty tests and the framework-related co-certification, and, not least importantly, the diffidence of some teaching staff.

However, five years down the line, the pay-offs include a revised language syllabus within the faculty, and the basis of a vertical integration with the Italian secondary school system. We also believe that the co-certification model which has emerged (and which appears to be unique) could be usefully adapted in other, quite different, language learning contexts.