

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Versant Spoken English Test Earns Prestigious ICC Certificate of Quality Assurance**

***Versant test “demonstrates highest standards of professional test development,” according to international standard-setting organization***

**PALO ALTO, CA – March 17, 2009** – The Knowledge Technologies group of Pearson, the leader in spoken language assessment, today announced that it has been awarded the Certificate of Quality Assurance from the International Certificate Conference (ICC).

Pearson’s Versant test was awarded the certificate after a three-month review by an independent panel of world-class experts in language training. The panel reviewed every element of the Versant test, from its potential for training programs to high-stakes examinations and offered the following conclusion: “The Versant test is at the forefront of currently accepted standards for test development, quality and research - indeed the quality of the supporting research is outstanding... The reliability of scores from the Versant program meets or exceeds standards expected from human raters... In short, the Versant test is innovative, reliable and user-friendly.”

The 63-question Versant English test maps to the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Common European Framework. Versant provides a thorough examination of speaking skills through a variety of tasks including reading, repeats, short answer questions, and sentence builds, as well as story retelling and open questions. The test lasts approximately 15 minutes and can be taken on a telephone or computer from virtually anywhere in the world at the time of the test administrator’s choosing. Because scores can be retrieved from a website within a few minutes of the test being completed, the test is unparalleled for its practicality and ease of use.

“Only a handful of organizations earn the accreditation each year because the standards are so high,” said Emeritus Professor Jack Lonergan, President, ICC International Language Network. “We have carefully examined the Versant spoken English test, and it is our expert opinion that it is a thorough, reliable, and accurate tool for measuring spoken English skills.”

The ICC Quality Assurance Report singled out Versant for best practice in the following areas:

- Reliability of scores
- Ability of scores to predict overall language competence
- A high correlation with scores given by human raters
- Wide and easy test availability
- Convenience of test administration
- Speed of result reporting
- Innovation in developing a fully viable machine-marked speaking test

Versant earned the prestigious quality certification in part because of the test’s accuracy and reliability. According to the ICC report, “Versant offers a direct measure of speaking ability, where overall competence in spoken English is broken down into four diagnostic components – Sentence Mastery, Vocabulary, Fluency and Pronunciation.”

“Before businesses and schools invest in a spoken English testing procedure, they need to be assured that it will accurately predict English language competence,” said Lynn Streeter, president, Knowledge Technologies group of Pearson. “We believe ICC’s certification of Versant gives them total confidence that our test will help them identify candidates with appropriate English communication skills.”

The ICC is an International Non-Government Organization that has participatory status at the Council of Europe. Its certification program is administered by the Quality Assurance Committee (CQA) in conjunction with the board and head office of the ICC European Language Network.

For more information about the ICC certification or to receive a copy of the Quality Assurance Report for the Versant Spoken English Test, write to Pearson Knowledge Technologies at [sales@pearsonkt.com](mailto:sales@pearsonkt.com).

### **About Pearson**

The Knowledge Technologies group of Pearson creates unique technology for automated assessment of speech and text used in a variety of industry-leading products and services. These include the Versant line of automated spoken language tests built on Ordinate technology, and WriteToLearn automated written summary and essay evaluations using the Knowledge Analysis Technologies (KAT) engine.

Pearson (NYSE:PSO), the global leader in education and education technology, reaches and engages today’s digital natives with effective and personalized learning, as well as dedicated professional development for their teachers. This commitment is demonstrated in the company’s investment in innovative print and digital education materials for preK through college, student information systems and learning management systems, teacher professional development, career certification programs, and testing and assessment products that set the standard for the industry. The company’s respected brands include Scott Foresman, Prentice Hall, Addison Wesley, Benjamin Cummings, PEMSolutions, Stanford 10, SuccessNet, MyLabs, PowerSchool, SuccessMaker and many others. Pearson’s comprehensive offerings help inform targeted instruction and intervention so that success is within reach of every student at every level of education. Pearson’s commitment to education for all is supported by the global philanthropic initiatives of the Pearson Foundation. Pearson’s other primary businesses include the Financial Times Group and the Penguin Group. For more information, go to [www.pearson.com](http://www.pearson.com).

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