

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***New Study Aligns Wall Street Institute's English Language Courses with University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations BULATS Language Test***

***Hong Kong students ranked #1 in English test conducted also in Germany, Italy, Portugal, Argentina and Saudi Arabia***

***International English examination BULATS endorsed by HKSAR Government alongside Qualifications Framework promotion***

Hong Kong, 29 June 2006 – Wall Street Institute (WSI), the largest international specialist English language education organisation in the world, announces the successful completion of a study that aligns the Wall Street Institute's English Progression Ladder with the University of Cambridge ESOL's Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) assessment tool BULATS, which is endorsed by the Hong Kong Government as a benchmark test for workplace English, is one of the most recognized business English language tests in the world, and its scales are aligned with the global standard of English language as set by the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The alignment with these internationally-renowned standards provides proof that WSI's English learning system is well-grounded and effective.

The alignment study involved WSI centres in Hong Kong and five other countries - Argentina, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Saudi Arabia. Over 5,700 students were administered the BULATS computer test in a three-month period to assess the alignment between the WSI Progression Ladder and the BULATS scales. The results indicate a good fit between WSI's English Progression Ladder from elementary to expert levels and the BULATS assessment of CEFR levels of language ability. Hong Kong students performed best in the test, outperforming those students from the five other countries.

Hong Kong students on average performed best in the test, outperforming those students from the five other countries in the study. Hong Kong students reached BULATS Level 2, which is equivalent to CEFR's Threshold Level [CEFR has six defined levels from Breakthrough (A1) to Mastery (C2)]. Aligning with the corresponding WSI and Qualifications Framework levels, this indicates learners in Hong Kong can converse with a high degree of fluency and are able to comprehend complex ideas expressed in English.

The study is the first phase of a two-phase assessment alignment study being undertaken by WSI with the support of the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. The results of the first phase were aligned using the RASCH model, which is regarded as the most rigorous method of assessment scale alignment and calibration for education and social science disciplines.

“We are pleased that Wall Street Institute has used BULATS in phase one of their project to align their courses with the Common European Framework. This framework provides a clear and objective basis for describing levels of language proficiency throughout the world. We are looking forward to seeing the phase two findings of the project next year,” said Mr Sean Hayde, Assistant Director of the Business Support Group, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations.

The match of the WSI and CEFR scales provides proof that WSI’s English learning system is well-grounded in one of the most prestigious language proficiency reference standards in the world. Enrolling in WSI’s courses, Hong Kong learners can confidently predict their results in many international English examinations including BULATS and IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

WSI Academic Director Dr Tony Lee said “The positive results from the alignment study are encouraging for Hong Kong students. Our application of the popular BULTAS testing method is now proven to be linked to internationally established levels of achievement. This provides students with confidence and reassurance that moving through the stages of our courses will prepare them to do well in the BULATS test and other benchmarks. Communication at work is becoming more and more international. Effective English language skills are essential for any person or company to excel in today’s global economy.”

The move reflects WSI’s ongoing commitment to help Hong Kong people get ahead at work, in their studies and promote lifelong learning. English learners will be well placed to take advantage of the Hong Kong SAR Government’s full launch of the Qualifications Framework in 2007, which is a new system that appraises communications and other skills for employees. Students who pass BULATS examinations are qualified for the Government’s Continuing Education Fund subsidy.

“With the continued and broader promotion of the Qualifications Framework in Hong Kong, we anticipate BULATS assessment of English proficiency will experience new levels of demand. The progression stages of our English courses also align well with the different levels of the Government’s Qualifications Framework,” added Dr. Lee.

Dr Lee concluded, “As a leading English language education organisation, we support Hong Kong people who want to widen their horizons and enrich their lives by improving their English, as promoted by the Government’s Workplace English Campaign under the current theme of “Let’s Learn and Live”. Improved English proficiency is also vital for Hong Kong’s further transformation into a knowledge-based economy.”

Hong Kong people are enthusiastic about taking courses to get ahead in work or in life. Research from WSI released in March showed about one-fifth (22%) of working age Hong Kong people plan to take a course in the next year. Among those, 45%, which represents

approximately half a million potential students, when asked if they intended to study English, responded positively in the survey conducted by market researchers Synovate for WSI.

The full results of the alignment study were announced at the Pacific Rim Objective Measurement Symposium (PROMS), which was held in Hong Kong on June 27 to 29, 2006.

### ***About Wall Street Institute***

Wall Street Institute (WSI) is so named because students can “invest” in their future – the PREMISE behind the famous Wall Street name. Since its establishment in 1972, WSI has grown into the largest specialist English education organisation in the world and currently operates more than 350 centres in 25 countries worldwide. It offers Hong Kong people the most effective English language instruction available using innovation, interactivity and the most sophisticated technology. Since WSI launched in Hong Kong six years ago, the company has opened 7 centres in key business and commercial areas and has already established itself as the market leader in adult English language education. Today, WSI has already helped more than 35,000 Hong Kong people learn English successfully so that they can achieve goals in business, career and their personal life. WSI’s international headquarters is in Baltimore, Maryland in the United States; its regional headquarters is in Barcelona, Spain.

WSI Hong Kong website: [www.wsi.edu.hk](http://www.wsi.edu.hk)

WSI International website: [www.wallstreetinstitute.com](http://www.wallstreetinstitute.com)

### ***About University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations***

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) is part of Cambridge Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge. Examinations and tests within Cambridge Assessment cover a wide spectrum of subjects and levels, and are being taken by over eight million individuals every year in over 150 countries. Cambridge ESOL is a leading examination and testing body in the world with quality test development, administration and research arms within its organization.

Cambridge ESOL exams are linked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment, published by the Council of Europe. This is a framework adopted by the European Union countries for language syllabuses design, curriculum specification, examinations, textbooks, etc.

Cambridge ESOL website: [www.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.cambridgeesol.org)

Cambridge Assessment website: [www.cambridgeassessment.org](http://www.cambridgeassessment.org)

### ***About BULATS***

The Business Language Testing Service (BULATS) is a language assessment service

specifically for the use of companies and organizations which need a reliable way of assessing the language ability of groups of employees or trainees. It is designed to test the language of employees who need to use a foreign language in their work, and for students and employees on language courses or on professional/business courses where foreign language ability is an important element of the course. BULATS test communication skills that are needed in real workplace situations.

BULATS is a collaborative venture between University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations and three leading European language institutes: the Alliance Française, the Goethe-Institut and the Universidad de Salamanca, ensuring the rigour of the tests, the accuracy of each language version and the reliability of the results. These organisations are all founding members of ALTE, the Association of Language Testers in Europe, which develop language examinations designed to test ability in the mother tongue of their own country or region. As a language proficiency assessment developed and run by a consortium of examination providers, BULATS is one of the most recognised business English assessments in the world. The ALTE Framework of Levels for Language Ability was developed in response to ALTE's objectives and has gained currency throughout Europe as the common standard to which all language qualifications should be linked. The Framework also corresponds to the Common European Framework established by the Council of Europe. Founded in 1989, ALTE now has 28 members representing 24 European languages. Since 2005, Wall Street Institute has become an observing member of ALTE.

BULATS website : [www.bulats.org](http://www.bulats.org)

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