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# Discussion Group: Rethinking Recommended Practices for Testing Writing

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# Introduction

This discussion group, focused on various aspects of testing writing, spanned 90 minutes and was divided into three parts. First, participants discussed national practices in testing writing. Second, we explored the document *BILC Best Practices in STANAG 6001 Testing* and considered potential revisions. Lastly, the ALTS writing module and its possible updates were discussed.

# Part 1: Nations' Practices in Testing Writing

Participants started by discussing national practices in testing writing. The discussion focused on test design, including levels tested, number of prompts, and test length. Participants examined prompt development, moderation, piloting, and prompt recycling. The session also addressed test mode, specifically the use of paper based or computer based tests and the role of aids such as dictionaries, spell checkers in a writing test.

# Part 2: BILC Best Practices in STANAG 6001 Testing

The workshop shifted to reviewing *BILC Best Practices in STANAG 6001 testing*, focusing on recommendations for productive skills testing, with a specific emphasis on writing. Participants were divided into groups to analyse different sections of the document, including testing specifications, recommended practices, moderation of prompts, and piloting. The goal was to identify areas where the document might benefit from more specific recommendations for writing. The groups discussed for about 15 minutes before sharing their ideas with the whole group.

# Part 3: ALTS Writing Module

In the final part of the workshop, the ALTS writing module was discussed. This module currently uses spiralling tasks from BAT-2, which involve prompts spanning multiple proficiency levels. Participants discussed whether the writing module should be updated to better reflect the writing styles found in national tests and the kind of writing used in the NATO TLU context. We also considered the use of more recent samples and scripts from national tests.

# Possible Next Steps

The workshop concluded with a brief discussion of potential next steps. The facilitator expressed gratitude for the participants' ideas and experiences and hinted at the possibility of requesting nations to donate writing prompts to better understand writing practices within the community. This information could inform revisions to the ALTS writing module, ultimately benefiting its future participants.

In summary, the workshop provided a platform for an insightful discussion of various aspects of testing writing, encouraging the sharing of best practices and potential improvements within the community. The workshop's outcomes may lead to enhancements in the document *BILC Best Practices in STANAG 6001 testing* and the ALTS writing module, ensuring they align more closely with the evolving landscape of testing writing.