Access to HE Diploma
Standardisation Report 2019-20

GENERAL SESSION

14 November 2019, One Awards, Peterlee

Attendance:

7 delegates from 5 providers attended.

<u>Attendees</u>
Philip Marshall – Bishop Auckland College
Julie Seal – Carlisle College
Mike Beverley – Carlisle College
Michael Sleeman – Derwentside College
Adi Gill – Newcastle College
Beth Hudspith – Newcastle College
Marie Andrews – Stockton Riverside College

In addition, there were 3 external moderators: Lindsay Ogle, Wendy Morris and Sarah Marsh. The facilitator was Alison Zucker, One Awards Lead Moderator.

Apologies: none

<u>Aims and Objectives of the event</u>:

Aim: To provide opportunities for those involved in the assessment and/or moderation of the Access to HE Diploma to increase their understanding of assessment requirements, and to compare their assessment judgements with others delivering and/or moderating units in the same subject area.

Objectives:
To undertake activities which enable participants to:
1. Compare assessment judgements in relation to student achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

2. Compare assessment judgements in relation to student achievement of grade indicators.

3. Explore and confirm QAA and One Awards requirements for assessment.

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Samples of student work chosen for the event:

Unit title: Study Skills L2 - series of discrete tasks on planning for personal study, note-taking and summary writing

Unit title: Study Skills L2 – series of discrete tasks on note-taking, summary writing and critical thinking

Unit title: Mathematics: Number L2– exam

Unit title: English Language Studies L3 – presentation

Unit title: Values and Practice in Care and Development L3 – academic poster (there was insufficient time to consider this sample)

The associated learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grade descriptor components were provided on separate sheets. The assignment briefs were not provided.

Summary of feedback from delegates and moderators

Sample 1 – Study Skills (3 tasks)

Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1	Some relevant points to meet 1.1 but much that is missed as student does not relate comments to the work itself, eg. considering word counts, deadlines. Comments are generalised and bland. Task asks students to identify 6-8 key factors and the student has only identified 4. Delegates felt that it would have been helpful to have the ACs alongside the tasks as the order of the tasks does not reflect the order of the ACs on the unit. Delegates also questioned whether a mind map was a suitable format for describing key factors when considering a study plan. Overall, superficial with limited in-depth reflection.	Just a Pass
1.2	Just achieved but evidence is thin. Somewhat under the allowed word count. Does not extend ideas or elaborate in any way. Learner has identified own strengths and weaknesses but not described them in any depth. Task on brief perhaps demands less than AC 1.2 as just asks them to 'identify' rather than 'describe' which is the command word in 1.2. Overall, superficial with limited in-depth reflection.	Borderline

3.1	Very sketchy, only one short paragraph. Student has not explained how and in what circumstances these methods of note-taking might be useful. Insufficient information for a description.	Fail
4.1	Not organised into a summary. Just a series of disconnected points and some of the points are incorrect, though some key ideas are identified. Some direct copying from the article. Points are not clearly expressed and reader would not be able to understand the main ideas of the original from the summary. Word count asks for 300-400 words but only approximately 150 in response. Does not seem like L2 work.	Fail

Sample 2 – Study Skills

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
3.1	Probably achieved but needs checking for plagiarism and some of the phraseology does not seem to match with other work in this assignment nor with the wording of the task, eg. use of term 'spray notes' rather than 'spidergram'. However, has described 3 different models of note-making and does include some references.	Pass
4.1	Difficult to assess as delegates did not have the original article but does seem like a plausible summary. However,	Pass
5.1	Limited comparison but there is enough to achieve, on balance.	Pass
5.2	Achieved but would be better if examples of fact and opinion were linked to definitions of these terms. Also, one delegate raised the question of whether 'fact' and 'opinion' had become compromised terms in 2019.	Pass
5.3	Limited drawing of conclusions from data (eg. bottom of first page of Task 3) but possibly just enough to achieve. General point on the assignment: as in Sample 1 students are following instructions rather than bearing in mind the ACs and sometimes instructions do not facilitate high achievement. How much is the student to blame for the inadequacies of the assignment brief?	Pass but more borderline

Sample 3 – Maths: Number

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators General: the discussion was compromised by the fact that only 3 delegates felt they had the expertise to assess Maths. This necessarily meant that discussion was limited	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.3		Pass
1.6	Not asked for in the assignment brief.	Fail
2.1		Pass
2.2		Pass
2.3		Pass
3.3	One delegate said that there was overkill on this AC as the same task had to be completed multiple times in slightly different ways.	Pass
3.4		Pass
3.5	No examples of wages and salaries in the exam. Not asked for.	Fail
3.6		Pass
4.1	Some units are used, but not a 'wide range'. Not asked for in the assignment brief.	Fail
4.2	There was brief discussion about whether 4.1 and 4.2 had been added together in the assignment brief.	Pass
5.1	No examples provided. Not asked for in the assignment brief.	Fail
5.2	A little bit of evidence on the last page of the exam.	Pass

Sample 4 – English Language Studies

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
3.1	Well covered across the assignment as a whole.	Pass
3.2	Achieved but overall analysis is limited, though there is plenty of analysis of individual features, eg. on Discourse 1. Features are named and then student explains why they have been used and what effects they have.	Pass
3.3	Lots of individual features analysed in Dr King's speech, including expressive utterances, rhetorical questions, the use of first person and negative lexis and covert prestige.	Pass
3.4	Conversation takes place in a work setting so a hierarchy is expected, which is shown in the conversation between 3 colleagues. The student examines various features relating to power, including formality, dominance, politeness strategies and turn-taking. One delegate mentioned the significance of topic shifting as indicating the exercise of power but another participant said that he was unsure as to whether the student had specifically linked language use to	Pass

	power Another commented upon the fact that power was bound up with gender, and was this too stereotypical for 2019, when gender fluidity needs to be taken into account.	

Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators General: delegates said that they could only assess what was in front of them and that the student may have enhanced the material on the day in his/her delivery. This raises the question of whether or how it is possible to standardise presentations without recording and watching them. Also, one delegate made the point that one of the two conversations could have been used for 3.2 and 3.4, thereby reducing workload for students.	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
2a, b and c	Secure Merit. Some very good analysis of a wide range of individual features but uneven, eg. slide 4 where quite a few linguistic features have been ignored. Definitely has breadth. However, also limitations of analysis, eg. in slide 5. For a Distinction the student would need to explain how the audience might have influenced Dr King's language choices. However, some good insights, eg. on how King encourages his audience to reflect on their faults. Makes some assertions/assumptions eg. on the gender of participants. One delegate commented on the fact that gender stereotypes are possibly used in the choice of texts, especially in the conversation between 3 women on hairstyles and in the power imbalance in the workplace in Discourse 3. For a Distinction the student needed to stand back and draw some conclusions from the evidence provided in a final slide.	Merit
5	Some slips in usage of specialist terminology, eg. 'constructive language'. Possible misunderstanding of 'parallelism' on slide 2. Rather limited use of specialist terms overall. Few comments on 'register' and LM assumes that since nothing jarred, it was, therefore appropriate.	Merit
7a and b	Points on slides or between slides aren't always linked – generally logical rather than consistently logical. Also, some delegates commented that the font size was too small to read and that the font sizes varied. There was too much information on the slides as well as various typos. Finally, structure and logic would have been improved had the students added a concluding slide.	Merit

Outcomes from discussion Course Contingency Planning

The facilitator led a discussion on Course Contingency Planning.

Task 1

The following key points were raised.

Course delivery
- The first issue raised was **staffing**. This encompasses many aspects but delegates were particularly concerned about contracted hours and the fact that because tutors were having to work the maximum number of hours on their contracts, there is no flexibility or 'wriggle room' when a crisis occurs.
- Delegates commented on the difficulty of recruiting and retaining staff who can teach Access. There was a tendency in colleges for anyone who is under hours having to teach Access, whether or not they have the aptitude or academic background. This can cause students to be disgruntled, perhaps resulting in complaints which then need to be addressed.
- **Health and safety** and availability of **suitable teaching rooms**. Various examples were given of large numbers of students (up to 28) being crammed into rooms, which results in unsatisfactory experiences for students and tutors, and again risks students becoming disgruntled, complaining and possibly leaving the course. This raises particular safety issues in laboratory classes, but at least here the number of work stations generally limits numbers.
- **Ungraded units** are not valued by some students and can cause them to become demotivated and even leave the course. Various suggestions were made to overcome this problem, such as the timing of delivery and making the units 'relevant', eg. by linking them to UCAS applications.

Marking
- The main concern was that the **increasing size of student cohorts** was putting a lot of pressure on tutors in terms of marking.
- Various suggestions were offered such as changing assessment methods (eg. avoid over-reliance on essays) and checking that over-assessment is not taking place. One delegate made the point that effective contextualisation had made his marking easier, because both he and the students had a clearer focus on what was required.
- However, ultimately it was felt that the problem could only be mitigated rather than resolved.

Internal Moderation
Staff often find this a chore and sometimes a few people are left to do it all, which undermines the process. The following points were raised:

- Staff changes cause problems as the Access grading model is unique. No solutions were offered other than directing new tutors to appropriate guidance.
- One way of ensuring that the job gets done properly is to hold an IM meeting, if possible, in CPD time, which all tutors must attend. Being together in one room can be motivating for tutors, thereby avoiding the 'tick box' approach.

- One suggestion was to highlight areas of good practice as well as areas needing improvement, so that IM is seen as a more positive experience.
- Another suggestion is to drop the pronoun 'you' so as to make the process objective.

Return of scripts

The main issues raised were:
- Time pressure to meet the turnaround deadline
- Pressure from students

This obviously links to the size of student cohorts. Few solutions were offered other than the fact that one delegate puts any student who pressurises staff at the back of the queue for marking, which seems to discourage this kind of behaviour.

Recording and tracking results

- It appears that this is often the responsibility of the Course Leader, which places a lot of pressure on him/her to keep up-to-date and be accurate
- One solution is to have periodic audits of the trackers which involve either admin staff or tutors

Task 2
- An agency tutor might be directed to the One Awards website to gain an overview of the grading model. He/she would be encouraged to watch the video for new tutors. In addition, a mentor should be allocated to the new tutor, but this puts extra pressure on already stretched staff.
- Absence of a particular tutor who only delivers one unit: a possible solution is to change the timetable around and defer the unit until the tutor returns. If the return of the tutor seems unlikely then One Awards should be contact to switch the unit to another in the rules of combination.
- Missing scripts from one assessment: submitting work electronically would solve this problem. Another suggestion is to encourage students to scan or photograph their completed work, eg. in Art and Design where electronic submission is often not possible. Remote hand-in (eg. at the library) can alleviate the problem; a receipt should always be given to the student and copies kept centrally.
- Tracking of results - please see task 1 above. No further suggestions made.
- Resubmissions policy not being adhered to: requires urgent staff training as a matter of compliance. This could/should be provided in the first instance by the Course Leader. Any potential grade polishing would need to be investigated and it may be that another assignment will need to be set.
- 'snow days': providers have a series of contingency strategies, as follows: communicate with students via the VLE, text or online forum. Activities can still take place remotely, with the tutor agreeing to dip in at designated times to monitor progress. Formative and summative work can still be submitted remotely. A time-constrained activity could be set. One delegate said that fostering a culture of independent learning from the start of the course would

help to mitigate problems with 'snow days'. They can be regarded as opportunities for students to make progress using their own initiative.

Agreed recommendations from the event

1. to ensure that all samples are easy to read. The font size of some of the material in sample 4 was very small.

2. to ensure that all resources on which samples are based are provided at standardisation events.

3. it is helpful for all concerned if ACs are mapped to tasks in assignment briefs.

4. there were several examples where the tasks in assignment briefs did not facilitate the highest quality responses from students. This is an area that the AVA and providers might focus on in future standardisation meetings.

5. for providers to consider the most effective way of delivering ungraded units and share good practice.

6. for providers and external moderators to check that over-assessment is not taking place.

7. to improve IM by holding a team meeting and highlighting good practice as well as areas for development.

8. to hold periodic audits of tracking documents.

9. to submit work electronically if possible, and if not, have a central hand-in location with receipts issued.

10. to have in place remote methods of communicating and studying.

Date report written: 16 .11.19

Name of facilitator: Alison Zucker