

Computing and Technology

28 November 2018, 9.30am-12.30pm

One Awards, Peterlee

Attendance:

7 delegates from 3 providers attended.

Keith Bradley (Hartlepool College of Further Education)
David Goodwin (Hartlepool College of Further Education)
Darren Jones (Hartlepool College of Further Education)
Steve Sowerby (Hartlepool College of Further Education)
Cher Griffiths (Middlesbrough College)
Paul Milburn (Newcastle College)
Michelle Taylor (Newcastle College)

The facilitator was Patricia Oswald, One Awards Lead Moderator.

Apologies:

There were no apologies

Aims and Objectives of the event:

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 approaches to assessment planning with others delivering and/or moderating units in the same subject area.

Objectives:

To undertake activities which enable participants to:

1. Compare diploma and unit assessment plans (AP1s and AP2s).
2. Compare assignment briefs (AP3s)
3. Explore and confirm good practice in relation to assessment planning

ASSESSMENT PLANNING DOCUMENTS CHOSEN FOR STANDARDISATION

Three diploma assessment plans (AP1), with unit assessment plans (AP2) and one assignment brief (AP3) for the following units, which are delivered by three providers:

- Programming Principles
- Understanding Organisational Network Security

The AP1s were considered in relation to:

1. Aspects of the plans which will enhance the students' experience
2. Aspects of the plans which will enhance the students' preparation for HE

The AP2s and AP3s from each provider were considered in relation to:

1. The suitability of the assessment methods/tasks for the level and purpose of the unit
2. Appropriateness of Grade Descriptor (GD) choices for grading the students' work
3. The guidance given to students about how to achieve the grades (contextualisation)

Summary of feedback from delegates and moderators

Diploma Assessment Plans (AP1s)

1. Aspects of the plans which will enhance the students' experience
 - All the AP1s contained a variety of assessment methods which would give the students a very good experience and cater for all types of learner.
 - Frontloading study skills gave the students good preparation for the Diploma
 - The AP1 for one college appeared to have more reports but overall a good variety still existed and a good justification was given in the strategy.
 - A practical element was embedded in all the AP1s.
 - The use of a blog was seen as innovative.
 - One College delivered over semesters because of the large number of students. The question of 2 different hand-in dates and the possibility for copying was discussed but the students came in on different days.
 - Another college delivered over 2 evenings and discussion took place on the difficulties of evening delivery and the work commitments of the students.
 - Smaller numbers helped with more individual attention and allowed for quicker turnaround from assignment submission to return of feedback to the students.
2. Aspects of the plans which will enhance the students' preparation for HE
 - The units chosen provided a sound basis for any route into university.
 - It was good to include the Higher Maths units
 - Academic writing and referencing were developed.
 - Independent learning was encouraged.
 - The assessments were well spaced out but the students would need good time management skills to meet the deadlines. This was particularly true of the evening delivery. This would prepare them well for university.
 - The production of a portfolio of research evidence was seen as innovative and a useful preparation for HE.
 - The use of scenarios provided a level of complexity and linked the units to the real world.

Unit Assessment Plans (AP2s)

3. Suitability of assessment methods/tasks for the level and credit value
 - The number of assessments per unit varied between 3 and 5. It was felt that perhaps 5 was over assessing.

- All assessment methods were set at the correct level for the unit and 9 credit value.
- Consideration should be given to equity in the amount of work required as described in the assignment briefs
- The evidence required was clearly stated
- The production of training guides was considered a very good method of assessment.
- The preparation of presentations which were not being delivered was discussed. This was considered to be a valuable skill in itself.
- The ACs were clearly covered throughout all assignments.

Assignment Briefs (AP3s)

4. Appropriateness of Grade Descriptor choices and clarity of guidance given to students about how to achieve grades (contextualisation)

- Consideration should be given to the number of GDs and components chosen as too many could cause difficulty in assessing and the students achieving.
- It was good practice to give word counts but the range should not be too wide.
- The use of the command verbs for the ACs in the assignment briefs was good practice otherwise the students might describe when they should evaluate.
- Clear guidance is required on the number of slides and the notes section when using presentations.
- The assessment of AC 2.4 regarding ethical decision making in Understanding Organisational Security was discussed and how much guidance should be given. One centre wanted the students to consider this without any guidance and another centre had given a list of points which could be included. It was agreed that there was no one way to assess this.
- Contextualisation needed to be developed further. In many cases it was missing all together though some useful help was given in the additional guidance.
- Contextualisation should go under the QAA wording in the AP3 template and should be clearly specified for Merit and Distinction. Using the same words as in the GDs would not help the students understand the difference between a Merit and a Distinction.

Outcomes from discussion on Draft Assignments

The facilitator led a discussion on the policy and practice of providers in relation to allowing draft assignments. The following key points were raised.

1. What is your policy on allowing draft assignments? Why this is your policy and when was it last reviewed?
 - All delegates said their centres had a no Drafts policy. They were unsure whether there was a policy or knew when it was due to be revised.

2. What are the problems with allowing drafts?

- The extra work involved
- Marking twice
- What can actually be said about drafts?
- Could lead to grade polishing if not implemented properly
- Should be the exception but would students start asking for it for all units?
- Timing of the draft
- Good assignment briefs and clear contextualisation would help to ensure that drafts were not necessary.

3. What are the advantages of using drafts?

- Confidence building for students returning to study.
- Help alleviate panic.
- The possibility of handing in a draft should be clearly indicated on the assignment brief.
- Clarity is essential in terms of ensuring equity of support for the students
- Drafts should be attached to the work for external moderation
- The centre policy on drafts should be clear in the student handbook
- Workshops could be useful for Access tutors to give general guidance.
- Many of the benefits of the use of drafts could come from good formative assessment tasks.

Agreed recommendations from the event

1. A broad range of interesting and innovative assessment methods prepare students for HE.
2. Careful consideration needs to be given to word counts to ensure they are appropriate.
1. Contextualisation is important so the assessors can grade more easily, accurately and consistently.
3. Contextualisation is important so the students understand what they have to do to achieve a merit or a distinction.
4. Providers to consider the contextualisation in the sample assignment briefs on the One Awards website when designing their own assignment briefs.
5. Centres to draw to the attention of Diploma Moderators an assignment which might be suitable for standardisation next year.
6. Lead Moderators to ensure that samples of work are collected so that in future student work can be standardised.

Date report written: 28 November 2018

Name of facilitator: Patricia Oswald