

## General Standardisation

2nd December 2020, 2.00pm-4.00pm

Via Microsoft Teams

### **Attendance:**

7 delegates from 6 providers attended.

Angela McGibbon (Ashton Sixth Form College)  
Charmaine Griffiths (Learner Progress College)  
Shirley Cannon (Ashton Sixth Form College)  
Marie Andrews (Stockton Riverside College)  
Mark Gomersall (New College Durham)  
Jill Hedley (Northumberland College)  
Anna Hope (Tyne Metropolitan College)

In addition, there were 3 external moderators; Lindsay Ogle, Sarah Marsh and Michael Makey.

Jennie Lawson, One Awards Head of Quality, attended at the beginning and the end of the session.

The facilitator was Margaret Close, One Awards Lead Moderator.

### **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 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.

## Samples of student work chosen for the event:

Unit title: Psychology – essay

Unit title: Contemporary Issues in Health Care – A3 media article

Unit title: Study Skills – booklet

There was insufficient time to discuss this sample.

The associated learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grade descriptor components were provided on separate sheets. A summary of the assignment brief was provided but not the full document.

## Summary of feedback from delegates and moderators

### **Sample 1 – Psychology (essay)**

#### Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
2.1	<p>Comments were made by all delegates that although the LOs/ACs worked together well in this assignment task, the inclusion of 3 out of 4 LOs seemed to be a very heavy assessment burden for the student (particularly if this was a first assignment) and for the assessor.</p> <p>All felt that when designing an effective unit assessment plan, it was important to consider progression and the allocation of LOs/ACs between assignments. Delegates suggested that it would have been better to have three assignments for this unit.</p> <p>There was a consensus of opinion that the student had explained two different psychological perspectives (Freud and Piaget) focusing on childhood development. One delegate felt that the explanation was superficial and just sufficient for level 3.</p> <p>One delegate said that they felt the essay was difficult to read in places and would have expected better written expression and paragraphing for level 3 especially with tutor guidance. The point was raised that the quality of written expression could impact on the clarity and quality of an explanation.</p>	Achieved

	<p>The relevance of whether this was a first or second semester assignment/unit was discussed as well as the nature of Access students in terms of their ability, skills, educational and social background. The importance of assessor feedback in the AP4 was raised, especially with regard to feed forward. All agreed that there would be an expectation that these written skills would be developed as the student progressed through the Access course.</p> <p>One delegate raised the question of whether the student would be disadvantaged by the large number of LOs/ACs allocated to this assignment. It was generally felt that although students might have found this to be a big first assignment for Psychology, it was hoped that sufficient tutor guidance would be provided so as not to disadvantage any student.</p>	
2.2	<p>The majority of delegates felt that the student tended to describe perspectives rather than analyse them. Some delegates thought that there was some analysis and discussion of limitations supported by examples but that it was not in enough depth to meet this assessment criteria. Delegates discussed the guidance surrounding a resubmission and that in this case, the student would need to resubmit a section of the essay related to AC 2.2.</p> <p>Delegates discussed the assessing of written work and agreed on the importance of justifying to the student the reasons behind an assessment decision particularly when a resubmission is required.</p> <p>The consensus of opinion was that if less LOs/ACs were being assessed then the student may have been able to focus more on this aspect of the assignment.</p>	Not achieved
3.1	<p>The significance of the use of command words was discussed and the importance of these in achieving the specific ACs, particularly with regard to evaluate and analyse.</p> <p>Delegates felt that the student had discussed the strengths and limitations of the work of the two chosen psychologists and that there was sufficient evaluation to meet the AC, although one delegate felt that it was very weak in places.</p>	Achieved
3.2	<p>The consensus of opinion was that the student had spent more time on Freud than on Piaget. They had evaluated his contribution sufficient to achieve AC 3.2, although it could have been in more depth.</p>	Achieved

	<p>One delegate felt that having a very good conclusion was really important when being asked to evaluate and that this was missing from the assignment. Comments were made on the student's conclusion where they indicated that the essay question had been answered, but that no evidence was supplied to support this.</p> <p>Another delegate felt that the student had missed an opportunity to evaluate the contribution of Freud by comparing it with the contribution of e.g. Piaget. They thought that this would have made a good conclusion and provided a more rounded view.</p> <p>Comments were made on how the student opened paragraphs with the words of the ACs, although material to meet these was often found elsewhere in the essay.</p>	
4.1	All delegates felt that the student had used the psychological terminology accurately and appropriately throughout.	Achieved

## Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
1c	<p>Delegates discussed whether the assessor had chosen the correct number of GDs and components for this assignment. It was felt that two GDs were suitable for a first assignment even though the majority of LOs/ACs were being assessed. One delegate commented that students take a while to get used to the grading process and that the use of too many GDs and their components early in the course, would make understanding the assessment process even more difficult for them.</p> <p>The consensus of opinion was that GD1c was a good choice of component, lending itself very appropriately to the selected topic and chosen LOs/ACs.</p> <p>Delegates discussed whether there was sufficient understanding for a Merit while one delegate felt that it was difficult to differentiate between good and very good understanding.</p> <p>One delegate commented that although the student struggled with some of the command words and written</p>	Borderline Pass/Merit

	<p>expression, they did demonstrate understanding of the perspectives. Some felt that there was very good understanding in some places but that it was less good in others.</p> <p>The value of IM was discussed particularly in relation to assessor uncertainty or indecision when grading and the role of the IM in supporting inexperienced staff.</p>	
7a	<p>A variety of different views were expressed on the choice of component a) for this assignment.</p> <p>One delegate saw it as problematic as none of the higher level skills would be factored into the grading and felt that component c) would be more appropriate as it covered the whole of the response to the demands of the assignment brief, factoring in command words e.g. analyse and evaluate. Another delegate felt that as the task involved the application of higher level skills in the assignment, component c) would be a better choice to assess the quality of these.</p> <p>Other comments were made on the fact that this was a first assignment and that it would be more likely that the student would achieve a higher grade using component a) rather than c). The student may not have completed all areas of the task well and therefore component c) may be said to penalise the student rather than reward them for their strengths.</p> <p>It was agreed that the essay was generally but not consistently logical and fluent and flowed well for the most part.</p>	Merit

## Sample 2 – Contemporary Issues in Health Care (media article)

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1	<p>Issues were highlighted by all delegates as to whether the assessment method as well as the assignment task was appropriate and to what extent it hindered rather than helped the student meet the LOs/ACs allocated. One delegate felt that the assessment method was suitable for LO1 but not necessarily for LO2, especially AC 2.1. Also, that there was no real opportunity for a detailed explanation or evaluation and that it seemed to be more about providing information.</p>	Achieved

	<p>Further comments were made on the nature of the assessment method and that it seemed overly complicated and restrictive. An A3 media article seemed to imply a combination between an article and a poster; it was unclear as to how the finished product would be displayed. Many delegates felt that there was too much information included for this to be put up on a wall.</p> <p>The purpose of the article (doctor's surgery) posed problems for the student both in terms of the structure of the piece of work and in their choice of topics to focus on. Delegates felt that the student had not really considered what was appropriate for a doctor's surgery. Some delegates thought that it would be better if students were able to choose the location for their article and then design it appropriately.</p> <p>One delegate felt that 'breastfeeding in the House of Commons' did not seem relevant to the purpose of the task, although it did fit the ACs, and that more advice could have been provided on the choice of topics by the tutor. Another delegate wondered why, as there was such a range of current issues to choose from, the student had focused on those particular areas and to what extent it was the fault of the assignment task.</p> <p>A number of delegates suggested that a leaflet with or without a poster may have been a better choice of assessment method while others suggested a magazine article. One delegate thought a presentation may be appropriate while another felt that if a presentation was completed very early in the course it might be too much of a challenge for some students.</p> <p>Delegates commented that asking the students to 'research and discuss' in the task set, differed from the command words used in the ACs e.g. explain, examine, evaluate. Although the assignment briefing guidance was more closely linked to achieving the ACs, it seemed unnecessary to ask the students to define 'published material'.</p> <p>The consensus of opinion was that two current issues in health care had been explained sufficiently to meet this AC.</p>	
1.2	<p>It was generally agreed that the importance of the ethos of good quality care had been explained sufficiently to meet this AC. However, one delegate felt that they had described rather than explained the importance of it.</p> <p>The consensus of opinion was that the choice of</p>	Achieved

	assessment method and assignment brief make the task of meeting the ACs more difficult and that students should not be penalised for this.	
2.1	<p>Overall, delegates thought that it would be difficult to meet this AC (evaluating published material) in this type of assessment method. Also, that it did not seem to fit with the purpose of the article which was for a doctor's surgery. All delegates agreed that LO2 would be better used either in another assignment or assessment method and although AC 2.2 was compatible, the LO must not be split between assignments.</p> <p>The achievement of this AC led to a discussion on inclusivity of assessment. It was agreed that the evaluation of published material was the weakest element of the student's work and that it was added near the end and appeared separate from the rest of the article. It was felt that a higher ability student would have integrated the evaluation of published material throughout when explaining and examining the issues in health care, while lower ability students would struggle with where to put this section without more guidance from the tutor.</p> <p>A point was raised praising the Access course assessment process regarding the designing of assignment briefs by the providers themselves and outlining the constant benefits of reviewing and improving assignment briefs each year.</p> <p>It was felt that, given the limitations of the assignment brief, the student had discussed the strengths and weaknesses of published material and although a bit 'thin', it was sufficient to meet this AC.</p>	Achieved
2.2	All delegates agreed that the student had examined an issue currently discussed in the media in sufficient detail to meet this AC.	Achieved

## Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
1a	Delegates discussed the importance of the selection of GDs and components with regard to the subject matter of the task and the chosen assessment method. GDs1, 2 and 5 were available to be assessed in this	Merit

	<p>assignment along with GD7. The consensus of opinion was that if this was a first assignment, then the choice of two GDs was a good assessment grading starting point for students.</p> <p>One delegate felt that GD1a was a strange choice and that the AP3 didn't give students the opportunity to achieve this. It was thought that GD2 might have been a better choice particularly with regard to a much wider choice of areas to focus on within components a) and c).</p> <p>The consensus of opinion was that the student had demonstrated a very good grasp of the relevant knowledge base and had a very good level of understanding overall. There were no elements of misunderstanding although it was felt that there was insufficient detail and evaluation for it to be a distinction.</p>	
7a	<p>All delegates felt that it was generally logical and fluent and that it was overall, much better than a pass. All felt that the choice of this component was easier for this student to achieve a higher grade while component c) would have made a pass grade more likely.</p> <p>It was deemed not to be a distinction as there were elements of some disjointedness especially near the end, with a weakly connected section evaluating published material. A logical flow was evident through the work although when moving from one subtitled section to another, there could have been more attempts to make links with the previous section.</p>	Merit

## Outcomes from discussion on Course Adaption and Planning in the context of COVID-19 contingencies

The following key points were raised during the session:

- Although providers differed over some of the specifics relating to their contingency planning for Covid-19, there were common themes of blended learning and the use of remote teaching either for certain units or when staff or students were self- isolating. The number of days per week for face to face teaching was either reduced or students attended college on alternative weeks.
- No major changes had been made to the methods of assessment or assignment briefs during the current government restrictions although other

alternatives to practicals were being considered in order to achieve the LOs/ACs.

- For some delegates, changes had been made to the structure of the course with regard to the sequencing of topics or deadline dates.
- Students varied in the extent to which they coped with remote learning and the levels of support needed. A point was raised by one delegate that students starting the course in September accepted online learning and adapted much easier than those who were forced into full remote learning during the lockdown introduced in March.

## **Agreed recommendations from the event**

1. For course teams to ensure that the choice of GDs and their components is appropriate and achievable in relation to the LO/ACs selected to be assessed in the assignment.
2. For course teams as well as internal and external moderators to ensure that the choice of assessment methods and the design of assignment briefs enables students to achieve the relevant LOs/ACs selected rather than making it more difficult for them.
3. For course teams to ensure that the importance of command words in the allocated ACs is recognised when designing assignment briefs and choosing assessment methods.
4. For course teams to review the number of LOs/ACs chosen for a first assignment as well as the rationale behind the number of assignments for individual units.
5. For course teams to recognise the significance of feedforward to students in ensuring skills development during the course.
6. For course teams and external moderators to recognise how the experience and outcomes of attending a General Standardisation session gives a different perspective to the assessment process than one focused on your own subject specialism.
7. For course teams to appreciate the value of IM, particularly in relation to assessor uncertainty or indecision when grading.
8. For course teams, internal moderators and diploma moderators to appreciate the advantages of the QAA/AVA Access course assessment process in providing the opportunity for providers to design and constantly review assignment briefs.

**Date report written: 7/12/20**

**Name of facilitator: Margaret Close**