

## Humanities, including English

24<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 10.00am-12.00pm

### Via Microsoft Teams

#### **Attendance:**

4 delegates from 4 providers attended.

Maggie McDowell (Tyne Metropolitan College)  
Judith Booth (New College Durham)  
Karin Herbener (Hartlepool College)  
Donna Stokes (Newcastle College)

In addition, there was 1 external moderator, Helen Williams.  
Jennie Lawson, One Awards Head of Quality, attended at the beginning and nearing 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: English Language Studies – essay

Unit title: History – Social and Cultural Development – magazine article

Unit title: English Literature – academic poster and timed essay

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 – English Language Studies (essay)

#### Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
2.1	<p>All delegates felt that this AC had been achieved although some thought briefly and superficially. One delegate felt that the student had engaged with the assignment and that it was well structured with arguments flowing logically.</p> <p>One delegate felt that the way that the assignment brief was set up meant that the learner would automatically meet AC2.1 (examine different types of discourse) by simply completing the assignment. It was generally felt that in order to meet this AC independently, students should select their own written discourses to be examined.</p> <p>One delegate felt that a large section at the beginning of the essay where the student had described different types of written discourse, was not relevant to the question and that a significant amount of the allocated word count had been wasted on this.</p>	Achieved
2.2	<p>It was generally felt that, although there was some analysis of the content, the analysis of the intended audience for both discourses was unconvincing and limited. It was felt that the weak coverage of audience might make this AC a borderline pass. One delegate felt that audience was just briefly mentioned when analysing linguistic technique and that understanding was poor.</p> <p>A number of delegates felt that the essay lacked balance with more emphasis, detail and a stronger analysis of The Pigeon Cree. The treatment of the poem was comparatively brief and more descriptive but it was felt to have just enough analysis to meet the AC.</p>	Achieved
2.3	<p>It was generally felt that the student considered language, register and syntax although there was some misunderstanding of the latter and opportunities were</p>	Achieved

	<p>missed to clearly demonstrate syntax. All agreed that the AC had been achieved although it was very superficial and with some weak written expression and grammar in places. The material was often implicit and had to be drawn from the text to show that they did meet this AC. Quotes cited did not always back up the points put forward.</p> <p>One delegate said that there was no recognition that the different forms of written discourse lend themselves to different linguistic techniques.</p>	
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## Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
1c	<p>The general consensus of opinion was that the student had achieved a Pass – linked to many of the points outlined in the above sections. It was felt that the student had a general level of understanding but that the inconsistent way in which the ACs were achieved, showed aspects of misunderstanding. One delegate felt that the student touched on individual points/elements but with limited linking or development.</p> <p>Delegates raised a number of issues regarding the choice of GD and the component. All delegates felt that GD1 component a) referring to grasp of the relevant knowledge base would have been more appropriate for this assignment and perhaps easier to achieve. Component c) requires the student to demonstrate understanding of perspectives or approaches, which for level 3 English Language Studies, one delegate felt, would require an understanding of methodology and for the learner to cite secondary sources. There was no evidence of this in the student's essay or bibliography.</p> <p>A number of delegates thought that GD2 would have been a better choice for this assignment particularly because of the analytical nature of the task. All stated that students should not be penalised in this situation.</p>	Pass
7c	Delegates agreed that the all-embracing nature of component c) made it more difficult for the student to achieve a higher grade. The student might achieve well on different aspects in their response to the assignment brief	Pass

	<p>while other weaker parts would keep the overall grade down. It was deemed to be a Pass by one delegate as a result of its structure of a technical discussion first followed by largely descriptive treatment of the short story and minimal engagement with the poem.</p> <p>All agreed that for GD7 component a) may have meant that the student had a better chance of achieving a higher grade.</p>	
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## Sample 2 – History – Social and Cultural Development (magazine article)

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1	<p>It was felt that the student fully engaged with the magazine article assessment method. The sample included a lot of factual material clearly showing historical development with a very good level of understanding in places. Although there was sufficient analysis to meet this AC, there was some 'jumping around' with narrative in places. More linking between historical developments/events and the speech could have been made.</p> <p>Delegates felt that the student had researched this well although it was unclear whether they fully understood each of the ACs (listed at the sides of specific paragraphs) they were trying to meet.</p>	Achieved
2.1	<p>It was agreed that the relationship between historical development and socio-cultural change was recognised and supported with factual information, sufficient to meet AC 2.1. Cause and effect were highlighted e.g. references to popular protests and responses to this by the government, political parties, journalists etc.</p> <p>All delegates agreed that there was some evaluation of this relationship although not in any great depth with many connections left implicit. It was there but not explicitly stated or always presented as a supported argument.</p>	Achieved
4.1	<p>A number of interesting comments were made on the assignment brief and the achievement of this AC relating to the analysis of a literary text. One delegate said that on first reading, it was not clear that 4.1 had been met and whether a speech would be classed as a literary text. It was explained that students were required to look at the written text of the speech.</p>	Achieved

	<p>Another delegate stated that in order to show clear analysis of the text, some knowledge and content of the speech should have been included, with quotations from it used to demonstrate analysis. A lot of focus was on the reception of the speech with some analysis, rather than on the speech itself.</p> <p>Overall, it was felt that the student had analysed to what extent the speech reflected society at that time by showing varying social attitudes and responses to it at the time, both positive and negative. Consideration of the issue of racial tension and race relations was clearly shown in the magazine article.</p>	
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## Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
2a & b (ideas, facts perspectives concepts)	<p>All delegates felt that there were too many elements chosen to assess component a) and attention was drawn to the fact that all of these had to be taken into consideration when grading. It was agreed that one or two areas might help students achieve a higher grade. One delegate felt that the use of 'concepts' was particularly difficult to achieve in this assignment.</p> <p>The general consensus of opinion was that overall, this was a Merit although one delegate felt it contained aspects of distinction level. A point was made regarding the lack of differentiation between a Merit and a Distinction in QAA wording for GD2a) and that more clarity on 'makes use of' for different grades would benefit assessors when grading.</p> <p>One delegate felt that the student made good use of information and facts and that it had some depth but because of the sub-headings and perhaps the word limit, it was difficult to show a lot of depth. Perhaps more synthesis could have been demonstrated in the concluding section to reveal greater depth of understanding.</p> <p>Another delegate felt that the student relayed an impressive number of facts and engaged with a good range of perspectives. They saw an impressive breadth of material being presented with depth seeming to go</p>	Pass/Merit Borderline

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	beyond that required for a Merit, although ideas were lacking in connection to the main subject.	
5 (structure images language spelling punctuation referencing)	<p>All delegates felt that the number of components chosen for GD5 made it much more difficult for the student to achieve a high grade. The majority of delegates felt that this piece of work should be graded at a Merit although one delegate felt that it was a Pass.</p> <p>One delegate felt that the number of components to assess meant that although some things were done very well, the shortcomings in other areas would pull the grade down. e.g. referencing, and prevent a distinction grade being awarded. If structure, format and images had been selected they felt that this could have been awarded a distinction.</p> <p>All delegates felt that structure and the use of images was a good way to assess the creative side of the magazine article brief although it was surprising that format was not included.</p> <p>One delegate argued that this was more in line with a Pass rather than a Merit. It was felt that the learner did not discuss the images within the text, and that the structure was very fragmentary with no connection between key points, and with no real connection to the content of the speech.</p> <p>Other delegates felt that the issues raised in relation to the achievement of the ACs set against the chosen components would prevent it from achieving higher than a Merit.</p>	Pass/Merit Borderline
7c	<p>The majority of delegates agreed that component a) logical and fluent would have been a better choice and more easily achievable for students. It was felt that there was a lot to achieve for a higher grade.</p> <p>One delegate said that it was difficult to award a distinction for GD7 c) when the work did not meet the criteria for the other grading descriptors. They felt that GD7 c) favours students who have done well on other GDs and perhaps puts less able students at a disadvantage.</p> <p>Delegates discussed as to whether the student response to the assignment brief was more than a Pass and whether it was a borderline Merit. It was felt that it</p>	Pass/Merit Borderline

	did cover the ACs and that there were some very good aspects to it with analysis but that it was let down by key points mentioned in previous section.	
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## Sample 3 – English Literature (academic poster and timed essay)

### Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
6.1	<p>Students completed two tasks in this assignment brief, each task linked to a separate AC. In task 1, students were asked to design an academic poster for the assessment of AC 6.1. It was agreed that this was a good assessment method to use although one delegate wondered if this was a first assignment.</p> <p>One delegate said that despite the explanations being rudimentary and in some places inaccurate e.g. dates, the student did explain two critical perspectives e.g. Marxist and Psychoanalytical, sufficiently to achieve this AC, although borderline. The feeling was that if this was a first assignment then students would have very different ability levels and starting points and further development would be expected in future assignments.</p> <p>Some delegates felt that the critical perspectives had not been sufficiently explained and that the work focused more on biographies and reference to literary extracts. It was felt that more time was spent on the people behind the theory rather than the critical perspective itself. The poster was felt to have insufficient content and not the correct content.</p> <p>One delegate said that the literary extracts included were not explicitly analysed as examples of any particular perspective. They felt that the material included to try to explain critical perspectives was minimal, naïve and at times incorrect.</p>	Borderline Fail/Achieved
6.2	Task 2, a time constrained essay was linked to the achievement of AC 6.2 and the general consensus of opinion was that the student's work had met this, although some thought it borderline.	Achieved

	<p>All delegates felt that the student’s work was better in the timed essay task than for task 1. One delegate said that as a controlled assessment, they would not expect to see work as detailed as when it had been done at home. They thought that, while there may be many areas for improvement, the student had met the AC.</p> <p>Delegates agreed that an exam was not perhaps the best assessment method for applying a critical perspective and that this should be considered when making an assessment decision on the work.</p> <p>One delegate commented that there was a lot to remember for an exam and in this type of level 3 task, students should be citing secondary scholarship or be able to summarise complex critical approaches in a meaningful way. Applying these approaches means analysing quotations from a literary text effectively.</p> <p>One delegate felt that the AC had been achieved; the student had shown a superficial understanding of Feminism in the broadest sense but not a specific critical perspective of a feminist theorist.</p>	
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## Grading judgements using GD components

<b>GD</b>	<b>Comments from delegates and moderators – based on if all ACs had been achieved</b>	<b>Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline</b>
1c	<p>It was noted that both tasks need to be taken into consideration when applying each of the GDs and that this would affect the overall grading.</p> <p>All delegates agreed that the choice of component c) made passing or achieving higher grades more difficult. It was felt that component a) logical and fluent, would have made a Pass more secure although it would not have led to the achievement of a Merit as there were issues regarding structure and fluency in both tasks.</p> <p>One delegate commented that the student had shown no understanding in the first task and very little in the second. Others felt that there was some understanding in the poster as well as the essay although just sufficient for a Pass.</p>	Pass

<p>2a (theories perspectives)</p>	<p>Delegates again raised the issue of the choice of components for GD2. For one delegate, the selecting of both theories and perspectives seemed unnecessary when the LOs specifically referred only to perspectives.</p> <p>An issue was also raised relating to the combining of the complexity of theories and perspectives a) with accuracy, when other more suitable components were listed for c). All delegates commented that the combining of components should reflect the nature of the assignment task and ACs.</p> <p>It was generally felt that even after a resubmission it was likely that the student would still achieve a Pass in all of the GDs based on their level of ability overall at this stage in the course.</p>	<p>Pass</p>
<p>7c</p>	<p>Comments on this GD were generally the same for the previous samples. Again, it was felt that as c) was taking the work as a whole, it was difficult for weaker students to achieve the higher grades even when some parts of their work might have been done very well.</p> <p>One delegate commented that the poster represented a very poor response to the assignment brief, while the essay test was strong enough to be a secure pass.</p> <p>Another delegate felt that, had logical and fluent (a) been selected instead of component c) then perhaps this work might have been awarded a Merit.</p>	<p>Pass</p>

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

The following key points were raised during the session:

- No major changes had been made to the methods of assessment or assignment briefs during the current government restrictions.
- As a result of some face-to-face teaching continuing, students were able to deliver presentations and time constrained assessments in class.
- All felt that remote delivery was not ideal but enabled the continuation of teaching and learning.
- Staff who were self-isolating were delivering the sessions online.

## 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 to ensure that the design of assignment briefs enables students to achieve each AC independently. This could be achieved by providing more clarity of explanation of the intention of the AC in relation to the LO and/or by being less prescriptive in the sources to be used to complete assignments e.g. the finding of sources/extracts by the students themselves.
3. For course teams to review the number of components used for GD2 and GD5 in terms of relevance to the assignment brief and the allocated LOs/ACs, and to consider the compatibility of components selected within these GDs.
4. For One Awards to forward comments to QAA to consider a review of GD2a in order to clarify differentiation between the requirements of a merit as opposed to a distinction, relating to 'makes use of relevant' e.g. ideas. QAA had commenced a review of the grade descriptors which was put on hold in March. This will be started again in 2021.
5. For course team assessors and internal moderators as well as external moderators, to consider in borderline cases, the reasons behind the final assessment decisions as well as the impact of the design of the whole assessment on the performance of the student.

**Date report written: 29/11/20**

**Name of facilitator: Margaret Close**