

Humanities and Social Sciences

18 November 2019, 9.30am-12.30pm

One Awards, Peterlee

Attendance:

12 delegates from 8 providers attended.

Pam Plumb (Darlington College)
Rebecca Winnard (Darlington College)
Steph Garnett (Darlington College)
Pauline Hughes (Derwentside College)
Karin Herbener (Hartlepool College)
Pam Small (Middlesbrough College)
Donna Stokes (Newcastle City Learning)
Sabine Gretscher (Newcastle City Learning)
Samantha Prosser (Prior Pursglove and Stockton 6th Form College)
Sophie Crawford (Prior Pursglove and Stockton 6th Form College)
Katie McCallay (Redcar and Cleveland College)
Maggie McDowell (Tyne Coast College)

In addition there was 1 external moderator, Helen Williams. The facilitators were Alison Zucker and Margaret Close, One Awards Lead Moderators.

Apologies:

Phil Poolan (Newcastle College)
Richard James (Stockton Riverside College)

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: History– Social and Cultural Development - essay

Unit title: English Language Studies – presentation

Unit title: English Language Studies – presentation. There was insufficient time to discuss this sample. However, the LM distributed handouts to delegates.

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 – History: Social and Cultural Development (essay)

Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
4.1	<p>A couple of delegates were doubtful at first but were persuaded by the discussion that 4.1 had been achieved.</p> <p>There was a discussion on the command word ‘analyse’, and the general feeling was that analysis was there, but that it was limited or superficial . Several delegates commented on the fact that much of the response was descriptive rather than analytical although the essay had an analytical structure. One delegate said that the analysis improves in the second half of the essay.</p> <p>It was generally felt that sections of the literary text (Love on the Dole - Arthur Greenwood) were chosen to cover specific issues of the Economic Depression e.g. living/working conditions, unemployment, health and illness, the North/South divide. There was general agreement that the perspective taken was primarily a working-class perspective.</p> <p>Some supporting material and statistical data was provided to try and prove that it was an accurate reflection of society in the 1930s but delegates felt that the quality of the sources used weakened the analysis of the text.</p>	Pass

	<p>For some delegates there was concern over the lack of secondary sources and that there was, perhaps, some bias in the selection of sources, as they offered a partial perspective. How robust could the analysis be with limited sources? However, the point was made by the LM that achievement of an AC simply has to be sufficient.</p> <p>One delegate raised the issue of plagiarism because of the limited in-text referencing. However, it was concluded that, overall, this was irrelevant to the notion of analysis.</p> <p>Overall, it was felt that there was sufficient analysis focused on both the question and the text to achieve the AC.</p>	
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Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
7a	<p>The majority opinion was that it was generally logical and fluent.</p> <p>It was felt that the essay was clearly structured with an introduction, main body and conclusion although the latter was unconvincing and lacking in detail. Each paragraph dealt with a particular issue relating to the question and specific quotes from the text were discussed in each. Delegates agreed that it was 'generally logical' but not consistently so.</p> <p>Discussion among delegates focused around the extent of fluency although most felt that it did seem to 'flow well'. One delegate felt that when analysing quotes from the text, the points being raised were not always clear and the weak supporting information did not help. While one delegate thought it lacked fluency and found it difficult to follow the ideas, another disagreed.</p> <p>One delegate said that the student was less fluent when trying to express his/her ideas and that one sentence was six lines long. There were lots of SPAG problems, and these hamper fluency.</p> <p>One suggestion was that perhaps it was a Merit for structure but a Pass for fluency. This resulted in a discussion on what is meant by 'fluency'. Does it encompass structure and flow</p>	<p>Merit though 3 delegates thought it was a secure Pass.</p>

	<p>of ideas as well as clarity of expression?</p> <p>One delegate said that the 'point, evidence, explain' formula contributed to the structure and fluency but that some transitional words would have helped.</p>	
<p>GD2 a and c</p>	<p>A discussion took place about the components and how assessors should take account of both of them when coming to a decision.</p> <p>Delegates felt that some relevant facts were used but they were limited in quantity and reliability/accuracy as a result of the lack of research and quality of the sources consulted e.g. Daily Mail, BBC GCSE Bitesize, non-academic websites. There were also doubts about the relevance of facts introduced, as these weren't always pinned to an argument, eg. the mention of radios.</p> <p>All delegates agreed that there was some analysis of the text and appreciation of how the impact of the 1930s Economic Depression differed between the North and South as well as social classes but that it lacked depth and was descriptive in places with some long quotes from the text.</p> <p>The LM raised the point that the background/motivation of the author in writing the novel was not explored and there was no analysis of how this might reflect on the accuracy of the text.</p> <p>A DM commented on the fact that there seemed to be little awareness of the fact that 'Love on the Dole' is a work of fiction conveying the author's particular perspective. There was a lack of awareness of how literature can help us understand society.</p> <p>One delegate suggested that the student should have started with the evidence in the novel, and then moved outwards. However, the LM pointed out that there is more than one way to structure an essay in response to this title.</p> <p>It was felt that overall the level of accuracy and analysis could not be described as 'very good'. One delegate thought that the response was mostly at Pass level, with some areas where Merit level was reached. There were touches of 'very good' but not sufficient for a Merit grade.</p>	<p>Pass</p>

Sample 2 – English Language Studies (presentation)

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
3.1	<p>The consensus of opinion was that two different types of spoken discourse (conversation and a speech) had been examined in the presentation.</p> <p>Also, the student has examined an informal and a more formal conversation.</p> <p>Achievement of 3.1 is secure.</p>	Pass
3.2	<p>The student has analysed features of conversation such as turn-taking, topic shifting and conversational dominance. Some of the analysis is very detailed and convincing.</p>	Pass
3.3	<p>Delegates overall felt that AC 3.3 was not as secure as the analysis for AC 3.2 or 3.4. Different types of features of scripted speech were identified and explained but analysis was limited and not consistent throughout. Delegates commented that there was little recognition that techniques were deliberate e.g. repetition, use of imagery etc.</p> <p>However, the consensus of opinion was that the AC was achieved.</p> <p>The question was raised as to whether there might have been more analysis in the actual delivery.</p>	Pass
3.4	<p>This AC was felt to be more confidently achieved than AC 3.3 with more depth especially on gender and power as demonstrated in the analysis of the manager's language., though some opportunities were missed, eg. commenting on the manager's use of sexist language.</p> <p>Delegates felt that there was more reasoning behind points raised compared with 3.3 and a more in-depth analysis and evaluation.</p> <p>One delegate highlighted that power play was clearly evident between the sisters in their conversation.</p>	Pass

Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
GD2 a, b, c	<p>All delegates apart from 3 considered this to be Distinction level work, as far as they could tell without actually listening to the presentations. The remaining 3 delegates opted for Merit.</p> <p>One delegate thought there was breadth but not depth.</p> <p>Another thought that on the evidence in the slides this was Merit level work but accepted that there were indications of Distinction level work which would, presumably, have been confirmed in the delivery. It was hard to grade without observing the students and this raised the challenges of carrying out IM and IS on presentations.</p> <p>Other delegates were confident that there was both breadth and depth here and that the response was very comprehensive, with many features referred to.</p> <p>One said that features were analysed precisely and convincingly. The student explains clearly why features have been used and the effects they might have on listeners, for eg. the use of instrumental power by the manager in discourse 3.</p> <p>The discussion on the manager's gender was felt to be interesting and well argued.</p> <p>The student offers alternate and tentative interpretations, eg. on the use of micro pauses, which is evidence of Distinction level work.</p> <p>The weakest analysis seemed to be of Dr King's speech where sometimes features are simply identified, eg. metaphors and the analysis of parallelism is very thin.</p> <p>Some significant features of MLK's language were not examined fully, eg. the Baptist influences on his linguistic choices and their effects on his audience.</p>	Distinction

	<p>Delegates felt that the student had made use of relevant facts and ideas but that they were limited in parts and that he/she could have expanded on their analysis of academic studies used to comment on the gender of the participants, ie. Jespersen and Tannen. A wider range of sources could have been used to support points raised.</p> <p>One delegate felt that consideration could have been given to how stereotypical the conversations were and the fact that the women were of a different social class (working class) to the men.</p> <p>A key point was raised in that copies of the PowerPoint slides alone provided insufficient evidence for a Distinction judgement but had witness statements/tutor observation sheets/student research been included then this could have been a Distinction.</p>	
GD5	<p>One delegate pointed out that there were a few examples of incorrect use of terminology and also some doubts as to whether the student understood all the terminology employed.</p> <p>However, the general view was that there was excellent use of specialist terminology and excellent use of an appropriate register.</p> <p>Again, the extent of the evidence provided on which to make an assessment judgement was discussed. It was felt that the best way to know if the student had an excellent command of language was by witnessing the actual presentation and/or having a tutor observation sheet.</p> <p>As the assessment method was a presentation, some delegates felt that 'register' was not necessarily the best component to choose.</p>	Distinction
GD7 a and b	<p>The general view was that the presentation was consistently logical and fluent. Slides were in a logical order (external factors identified, followed by comments on each speaker, concluding with analysis of individual features). Points within slides were consistently well ordered.</p> <p>The headings on slides aided clarity.</p> <p>One delegate said that there were some ambiguities but did not elaborate.</p>	Distinction

	<p>One delegate said that arguments were incomplete because there was no reference page.</p> <p>There are occasional SPAG slips, eg. 'those legislature', 'affect' used instead of 'effect'.</p> <p>Lots of evidence was provided and therefore arguments are unambiguous.</p> <p>It was felt that the presentation needed a conclusion.</p> <p>The issue was raised over the choice of components and whether it was helpful to have both a) and b). There was a general feeling that only one of these would have been sufficient.</p> <p>Delegates felt that the assessment of 7b very much depended on the student's delivery of the presentation although the PowerPoint slides demonstrated an excellent and consistent structure (7a)</p>	
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Outcomes from discussion Course Contingency Planning

The facilitator leads a discussion on Course Contingency Planning. The following key points were raised.

TASK 1

Course delivery:

- One delegate said that owing to feedback from last year's students the team decided to restructure the course, delivering English Literature first. Students did not complete the required preparatory reading and as a result struggled with the first assignment. Several gave up and withdrew. Possible solutions: implement draft policy for this first unit only and also review the structure of the course, deferring the English Literature unit until later in the year. The example illustrates the potential pitfalls of responding to student feedback, when it might be better to rely on the judgement of the tutors on the course.
- Almost all delegates cited staffing as a potential serious problem in course delivery. Most delegates said that it was impossible to provide cover, though some who were working in a small team did cover lessons out of goodwill. The general feeling was the crises of all kinds were often mitigated where there are small teams of staff who are highly supportive of each other.
- In relation to staffing, diplomas are sometimes delivered without all the necessary staff being in place at the start of the year or when a member of staff suddenly leaves. HR systems appear to be inflexible and implementation of solutions by HR takes a long time, which is problematic on such a concentrated, time-limited course. Access teams have little influence on HR

but potential solutions offered were distance learning and catch-up lessons in the holidays.

- Pinch points can occur when there is no dedicated Access team, where tutors teach across multiple courses, and sometimes multiple sites. This prevents tutors from working flexibly when crises occur, especially in relation to staffing. No solutions were offered, as these are structural and management issues over which Access teams have no control
- Access is a demanding programme for tutors who are new to it, especially if they are plunged in without little notice. Again, supportive colleagues alleviated potential problems.
- In most providers there seemed to be one person who is responsible for many aspects of course delivery, and this is a risk. A potential solution is to share responsibility with a colleague, but it was not clear how this might be managed in terms of contracts, timetables and so forth.

Marking

- One delegate mentioned that a tutor had taken away a set of unmarked scripts and then resigned. Potential solution: assignments to be submitted online (as well as in hard copy?).
- One tutor new to teaching Access said that she found determining Merit grades tricky. Solution: internal and external standardisation activities.
- Time was mentioned as a serious concern by almost all delegates. Two tutors said that each assignment took them 45-50 minutes to mark. One potential solution which was discussed was the need to prioritise messages in feedback and not to write too much. This benefits the student who may be overwhelmed by the quantity of feedback, and it also benefits the assessor in terms of time spent. Other suggestions were to check that over assessment is not taking place and to reduce the number of components where appropriate in graded assignments.
- Some delegates mentioned that it was a college requirement to mark every SPAG error which is very time consuming and they questioned the usefulness of this, especially as students frequently repeat errors. No solutions were offered but perhaps One Awards could provide some guidance.
- One delegate mentioned that she found it hard to get to grips with marking on Access because the model is completely different from any other course which she has delivered.

Internal moderation

- Again, time was mentioned as a concern and the fact the IM for Access appears to be more 'in depth' than for other qualifications. One suggestion discussed was to take a whole team approach to IM and hold a meeting where attendance is compulsory. This allows for informal discussions and sharing of good practice. As the meeting is time-limited, it might prove to be more efficient than fitting in IM as and when, which appears to be the practice at some providers.
- Staffing restrictions can impact on IM as sometimes non-specialist internal moderators are corralled to participate. No solution was offered.

Return of scripts

- Time pressure in order to meet two or three week deadlines was again mentioned (see comments on marking above)
- Extensions can cause problems regarding the return of scripts. Because of the need to preserve the integrity of the assessment, marked work is held back until all extension submissions have been marked.

Trackers

- No problems were raised with completing trackers other than the one already alluded to, i.e. the fact that there is generally one person responsible for all of them (see comment above on course delivery)

TASK 2

- No easy solution was offered to the parachuting in of an agency tutor with no recent Access experience. In practice, the best that can be achieved is 'speedy mentoring' to quote one delegate. Delivery teams generally have little or no control over selection of agency staff.
- Absence of a tutor delivering a particular unit: most delegates said they would try to restructure the course where possible, so as to delay delivery of this unit until the member of staff returned. However, if it seemed as though the absence was going to be indefinite, then the provider would contact One Awards (either their LM or the Quality Manager) to ask whether another unit from the Rules of Combination might be delivered instead.
- Whereabouts of a script is unknown: one way around this is for students to save their work on One Drive or other file hosting services.
- Delegates felt that bullets 4 and 5 could be linked because problems with resubmissions affect completion of trackers. Several delegates mentioned that this was particularly acute with ungraded units. Those tutors who delivered ungraded until in the first few weeks and 'sold' them as being essential preparation for later, graded units appeared to be having fewer problems with deadlines being adhered to. Delegates asked whether it was possible to refuse to mark assignments after a certain time had elapsed, and whether One Awards could give guidance on this. Would college policy trump QAA and AVA regulations in this respect?
- 'Snow days' etc: a series of solutions were offered, including use of the VLE, Moodle online forums and global text messaging.

Agreed recommendations from the event

1. for Course Leaders to ensure that plans and systems are in place for distance learning, in case of 'snow days' or unforeseen staff absence
2. for Course Leaders to ensure that tutors know where One Awards guidance for tutors new to Access can be found, so that they can be directed to it.
3. for course teams to share responsibilities relating to course delivery and management where possible, so that too much does not depend on one person
4. for students to submit assignments electronically
5. for course teams to hold an internal standardisation meeting to determine strategies for marking in a way which is most helpful for students and which reduces pressure on tutors
6. for course teams and external moderators to check that over-assessment is not taking place
7. for course teams and external moderators to review the choice of components so as to ensure that only the most useful ones are chosen
8. for One Awards to provide some guidance on the marking of SPAG, which might inform practice within providers
9. for Course Leaders to consider holding a whole team IM meeting
10. for students to save their work on One Drive or another file hosting service
11. for course teams to consider the most effective ways of delivering the ungraded units, so as to ensure they are seen as meaningful by students
12. for One Awards to provide some guidance for providers on how best to handle internal moderation and standardisation of presentations.
13. for guidance to be given on what is meant by 'fluency' in GD7a

Date report written: 19/11/19

Name of facilitators: Alison Zucker and Margaret Close