

Humanities, including English

8th November 2018, 9.30am-12.30pm, One Awards, Peterlee

Attendance:

8 delegates from 8 providers attended:

Pam Plumb (Darlington College)
Gayle Blackburn (Derwentside College)
Karin Herbener (Hartlepool College of FE)
Michael Law (Middlesbrough College)
Sabine Gretscher (Newcastle City Learning)
Ralph Booth (Redcar and Cleveland College)
Marie Andrews (Stockton Riverside College)
Elaine Renton (City of Sunderland College)

There were no Diploma Moderators present at the event.

The facilitators were Alison Zucker and Margaret Close, One Awards Lead Moderators.

Apologies:

Steph Garnett (Darlington 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: English Language Studies – essay

Unit title: History - Social and Cultural Development – essay

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 1a – English Language (essay)

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
2.1	The student clearly examines two different types of written discourse, a diary and a novel.	Pass
2.2	Intended audiences were identified for both texts but some comments were unconvincing and lacking in detail with no real analysis. There were a few statements and assertions rather than analysis. The consensus was that there was insufficient analysis to pass on this AC. In addition, references to content were limited in both texts, though some knowledge was displayed, mainly via quotations and brief examples. The essay would have benefited from a fuller, clearer explanation of the contexts of both texts in the introduction.	Fail
2.3	The student tries to analyse language and gives plenty of examples of language use but most of the attempts at analysis are unconvincing, e.g. the explanation of the poster of Big Brother in <i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> . There were a few references to register but again these tended to be unconvincing assertions (e.g. on the language of a gentleman in Scott's diary) rather than analysis; syntax was not analysed. The use of incorrect linguistic terminology suggested confusion.	Division of opinion Fail (3) Borderline Pass (4)

Sample 1b – English Language (essay) Resubmission. The student has resubmitted having had feedback that he/she had not achieved AC 2.3 in relation to analysing syntax.

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
2.1		Not Applicable
2.2	Nothing changed with regard to intended audience therefore still a fail but perhaps this omission was not highlighted by the assessor as an area that needed attention, in which case it was not the student's fault!	Fail
2.3	There were a few more references to syntax and register, and, arguably, some very basic analysis. The overall consensus was that this resubmission was a bare Pass on this AC.	Pass

Grading judgements using GD components

It should be noted that at this stage the sample would have failed or a referral would be appropriate. Grading would not be permitted. For the purposes of the standardisation session only, possible grades were discussed and agreed

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
1a	The grasp of knowledge was limited, evidenced by the confusion over literary terms and some incorrect application of terminology, e.g. simile.	Pass
2 a, c	Basic analysis at best. The student does make some use of relevant facts and ideas but is not helped by the lack of understanding described above in relation to GD1a.	Pass
7b	There was some debate over whether the argument was ambiguous. Overall it was felt that although the language impedes completely clear, nuanced expression of ideas, the ideas themselves were not ambiguous. The argument advanced in the essay can be summarised and therefore meets the test of being 'generally unambiguous'..	Borderline Merit

Sample 2 – History (essay)

Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1	The consensus was that this AC is achieved, but not in detail. One delegate said that the achievement was inferred, rather than explicit. Historical development was evident across the Industrial Revolution period with references made to technology/inventions/changes and the use of specific examples but lacked detail. Evidence of understanding of the period was there with an analysis of a 'before and after' approach.	Pass
2.1	All delegates agreed that there was enough to achieve, with a range of socio-cultural relationships shown. One delegate thought that the evaluation was thin or even implied where limits were discussed. Strengths and weaknesses were explored and related to historical and socio-cultural factors and urbanisation with linking to how it affected conditions of factory workers and children but lacked depth of analysis and detail.	Pass
6.1	All delegates agreed that this AC is achieved. There was a discussion on the command word 'analyse', and the general feeling was that analysis was there, but that it was quite limited, though it was evident that the writer has an understanding of the two ideologies chosen. Analysis was focused around aspects of two opposing ideologies and two views of the period with the key features of each but there was very little real analysis of the strengths or weaknesses of individual ideologies in relation to the period.	Pass

Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
2 a, c	A full discussion took place about the components and how assessors should take account of the two of them when coming to a decision. The point was made that in the 'Grading Scheme Handbook' the components are linked by the word 'with' and that even though it was felt that the writer had achieved a Merit level on 2a on the use of relevant perspectives, when combined with 2c the grade awarded	Pass

	should be Pass, as analysis is very limited across the whole of the assignment and of the ideologies/perspectives themselves.	
5	It was felt to be reasonably well structured with an introduction, a generally logical organised main body and a conclusion. Most delegates felt that the referencing let this script down. Some sound points had been made in the essay, but these were not supported by references. Only direct quotations had been referenced and the quality of some of the sources in the bibliography was questionable, e.g. Prezi.	Pass
7b	A discussion took place about the appropriateness of component b and the view was expressed that, had another component been chosen for this GD, then the student might not have achieved a Merit. The choice of component b therefore worked to this student's advantage. Most delegates agreed that the arguments in this essay were 'generally unambiguous', though one delegate thought that the SPAG was affecting the clarity of argument, and thought a P was more appropriate.	Merit

Outcomes from discussion on Draft Assignments

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

1. A predominantly no drafts policy was in operation across the centres represented.
2. The number of problems associated with allowing drafts outnumbered the problems of not allowing them.
3. Problems identified with allowing drafts included: staff workload, defining the limits of feedback, whether it would build confidence or contribute to students as independent learners, consistency and fairness, unnecessary with clear and detailed assignment brief guidelines, problems with timescales and assessment planning, increased stress for both students and staff, students who submitted drafts not necessarily being the ones who need them.
4. Problems identified with not allowing drafts included:
 - students missing out on a vehicle to allow for the development of skills and confidence building especially at the start of the course
 - lack of awareness of what constitutes a draft could lead to undeclared drafts operating alongside a no drafts policy whereas more transparency and fairness would be created by acknowledging the use of drafts
 - if you have a no drafts policy then you must stick rigidly to it
5. Drafts can provide a vehicle for more feedback which hopefully students will take on board to other areas/assignments.

6. If the Study Skills unit is not offered on the Access programme then drafts could be used at the beginning of the course for e.g. argument construction/paragraph writing etc. or used more in the ungraded units (e.g. English) although it might be worth considering doing a Study Skills unit rather than thinking about the introduction of drafts.
7. The QAA Draft Policy allows for very limited feedback which sometimes conflicts with college-wide SPAG policies.
8. Drafts need not be introduced right across the Diploma but could be used in specific units/assignments. This would need to be indicated in the assignment briefs and the draft included in student files.
9. It was felt that practising skills/using exemplars/assessment tasks/assignment focused workshops etc. encompassing peer feedback and a critical eye, could be more helpful than a draft.

Agreed recommendations from the event

1. To select GD components which best fit the assignment as well as meet the needs of students.
2. For One Awards to revisit the handling of resubmissions, perhaps in a future standardisation session and to direct providers to the guidance on the website. Assessors need to be sure they are asking for resubmissions for valid reasons. When has a student done enough to meet a particular AC? A resubmission does not mean rewriting the entire assignment, just a response to the ACs which were not achieved.
3. For providers to explore whether a well written assignment brief might prevent the need for drafts at all
4. To consider the dangers of allowing 'the student voice' to determine practice, e.g. on use of drafts. Do students know what's best for them? Also, one cohort's opinions might not be appropriate for the next year's cohort.
5. To provide clear examples of Pass, Merit and Distinction level work in future standardisation sessions. Diploma Moderators to look out for appropriate samples at the Spring sampling visits.

Date report written: 12/11/18

Name of facilitators: Alison Zucker and Margaret Close