

Maths, Physics and Engineering

5th December 2018, 9.30 am - 12.30 pm
One Awards, Peterlee

Attendance:

Three delegates from three providers attended.

Stefania Istrat (Newcastle City Learning)
Richard James (Stockton Riverside College)
Paul Mullender (Middlesbrough College)

In addition, there were three external moderators:
Adam Adgar, Steve Bloomer, Margaret Juniper

The facilitator was Dave Pickersgill, One Awards Diploma Moderator.

Apologies: James Wells (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:

Sample One: Unit title: Higher Skills in Maths – Data Collection, Sampling and Visual Representation of Data – series of structured questions

Samples Two and Three: Unit title: Physics – structured questions

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: Higher Skills in Maths – Data Collection, Sampling and Visual Representation of Data – series of structured questions (Ungraded)

Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1		Pass
1.2	The student is asked to 'define' – this is not required by the AC. The student has a mix of correct and incorrect examples, they have not clearly distinguished between population and sample. Hence, it is not possible to assume achievement of the assessment criteria.	Fail
1.3		Pass
2.1	It was felt that the question could be more clearly worded. A rigorous IM process should aid such clarification.	Pass
2.2	The subject of the question was felt to be a poor example. The student is asked to consider data relating to people, thus raising ethical considerations. In such questions, examples which relate to 'scientific things' should be used (for example: data on plant growth, resistors in a box ...).	Pass
3.1		Pass

The consensus was that this sample should have been resubmitted (AC 1.2).

Samples 2 and 3: Physics – structured questions – two samples, each from the same assessment.

Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

AC	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/ borderline/fail
1.1	Throughout, sample 1 gave clear concise solutions while sample 2 provided more detailed explanations, often including non-essential detail.	Pass
2.1		Pass
2.2		Pass
2.3		Pass

Grading judgements using GD components

GD	Comments from delegates and moderators	Consensus decision Pass/Merit/ Distinction/ Borderline
1a		Distinction
3a, b, c	Assessor has used too many bullet points. There was some discussion regarding sample 1 (were all bullet points achieved at Distinction).	Distinction
7c		Distinction

Outcomes from discussion on Draft Assignments

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

Comments:

The real world involves collaborative drafts (reports, papers etc) – are we preparing students for the real world by not allowing drafts? However, assessment is generally an individual, not a collaborative activity.

1. Problems with allowing drafts:

Unless a clear process is in place, there can be difficulty when responding to drafts. The One Awards guidance is helpful in clarifying how tutors should respond to drafts.

It was felt that the use of drafts can lead to:

- Grade inflation
- No resubmissions
- A high number of distinctions

It can also put students at a disadvantage when they progress to HE

2. Problems with not allowing drafts:

If an assignment is not well-written, this can lead to confusion when students receive an assignment. In such a situation, can 'verbal clarification' be seen as responding to a draft?

The importance of the IM process was emphasised. Well-written assignments which have been through a rigorous IM procedure will be clear to students.

It was also

(i) suggested that the submission of a resubmission could be seen as a student responding to comments about a draft.

(ii) noted that it is possible to allow drafts for basic calculation or numerical work

There was also a discussion around the question as to why the AVA does not provide assignments. Points mentioned included:

- The historical development of Access to HE: essentially a provider-led, and driven, process.
- Difficulties in the selection of grade descriptors and the writing of provider-specific contextualisation.
- The dangers of collusion between students/ staff from different providers who take an assignment at different times in the academic year.

Agreed recommendations from the event

1. The importance of IM process emphasised – if assignments are well-written, there will be less confusion for students and assessment by tutors will be more straightforward. Time spent on the IM process reaps dividends when students are later assessed.
2. It is advisable to employ few bullet points for GD. For example: GD3 could utilise from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 13 bullet points. It is felt that in most cases, 2 or 3 is sufficient.
3. Use contextualisation statements to provide clarification for students. For example, mention the importance of units, appropriate explanation and use of significant figures.

One Awards exemplar assessment includes possible contextualisation statements: <https://www.oneawards.org.uk/access-to-he/ahe-info-providers/ahe-guidance-resources/ahe-assignment-briefs/>

Date report written: 5th December 2018

Name of facilitator: Dave Pickersgill