Assessment and Grading
Basic Training

The Basics of Assessment and Grading for Access Practitioners
Aims and Objectives

• To introduce the key processes which are employed within the QAA Access Grading Scheme in order to ‘grade units’

• To assist ‘chalk face’ practitioners in remaining compliant with the QAA Regulatory framework.
The Foundations…

• All Access to HE Diploma titles contain 60 credits…

• 45 Credits MUST be from Graded Academic Content (Units)

• 15 Credits Must be from either Ungraded Academic Content or Study Skills units

• ALL LASER Access to HE Diploma Rules of Combination must include an appropriate Independent Academic Study or Extended Independent Academic Study Unit as either Graded or Ungraded Content
Units: Size Matters!!!

• Units are available in 3 types…

• Units available as 3 Credit; 6 Credit and 9 Credits…

• Size is dependent on the amount of time taken to complete the unit…
So what does that mean…

• The Equation: 1 Credit = 10 Hours of Study

• Therefore:
  • 3 Credits = 30 Hours
  • 6 Credits = 60 Hours
  • 9 Credits = 90 Hours

• This is the approximate time it should take the student to complete all the necessary work to achieve the unit (including classroom time, independent research and completing the assessment)
Units and Stuff…

• For a student to complete a unit and gain credit they must achieve ALL of the Learning Outcomes for the unit…

• Learning Outcomes state what a student can do when they have completed the unit…

• There is no credit for partial achievement…
How do we know a Learning Outcome is Achieved?

- All Learning Outcomes have Assessment Criteria attached…

- These are evidence statements…

- The student has achieved the LO because *they can*…

- All Assessment Criteria must be completed for a student to gain the credits for that unit
Assessing a Unit

• Any student assessment / assignment must therefore measure the achievement of LO’s and AC’s…

• This can be through one or more assignments…

• Assignments can be presented as multiple tasks on one brief or as separate tasks on more than one assignment brief… But an LO or AC can only be assessed in ONE assignment

• All the LO’s and AC’s must be met for the student to achieve the credits…
How Does Grading Work???

• If a unit is graded then any assessment / assignment will have *Grading Descriptors (and their Components)* attached which measure student performance…

• The Grading Descriptors are set by LASER and will be the same whichever provider uses the unit…

• The *Grading Descriptor Components* are optional and can be used to tailor grading statements to the nature of a particular assessment /assignment
Grading Descriptors and their optional Component Statements can be found in the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook Section B
Assessing the GD

• All *Grade Descriptors (and their allocated components)* must be assessed at least once in terms of grading a unit…

• If more than one assessment or assignment is used for the unit then GD7 (and its allocated component(s)) must be assessed in terms of every assessment / assignment…

• Other GDs (and their allocated components) can be assessed once or more than once…
Weighting for Assessments

• A clever way of using GDs would be to assign different GDs to different assessment / assignments…

• Look at Example One: GD 1,2,5,7 is measured by Assignment One and only GD 2,7 is measured by Assignment Two…

• Therefore Assignment One generates more grading data than Assignment Two… It is weighted more heavily…

• Assessors can use this to weight the larger assessment which measures more LO’s and AC’s (although they don’t have to)
Grading and Assignment Briefs

- The QAA require that students know how they are to be assessed…

- Therefore, assignment briefs should incorporate the LO’s and AC’s to be measured by any given assignment and also the Grading Descriptor Components which are used to assess the work as well as specific guidance on the assignment tasks themselves…

- Each Grading Descriptor will have optional Components which the centre will use to assess performance at Merit and Distinction level… The centre chooses these but the same component statements must be used for Merit and Distinction

- This information must be clearly accessible to students. We also suggest good practice suggests that the GDC’s should be contextualized / explained by the assessor in relation to the assessment

- Internal Verification systems must be employed to check that all assessment / assignment briefs are fit for purpose. The LASER template IMA 4: Diploma Assessment Plan may assist providers / Internal Verifiers to keep a record of their consideration and verification of assignments in terms of the above
So What Next?

• The student will complete the assignment…

• The Assignment will be marked but will NOT ‘get a grade’…

• Pass is measured solely upon the completion of ALL LO’s and AC’s… Merit and Distinctions is determined with reference to the GDC statements as allocated to the assessment / assignment

• It will generate ‘grading descriptor data’ which will be put together / aggregated to determine the overall grade of the unit…
How do you get a grade then?

• Look at Example 2…

• In this example there are two assessment / assignments

• Assignment One: MPP
• Assignment Two: MPM

• If these are aggregated we get a grade profile across the unit of:

• PPPMMM

• The Unit Grade is determined by the ‘mid-point’ of the grade profile
• Example Two does not have a mid-point…

• This can happen… In this instance the assessor should look at performance in relation to GD 7 as the determining ‘trump’ Grade Descriptor…

• In Example Two GD7 achieved a P for Assignment One and an M for Assignment Two so this does not help…

• Where this occurs the Assessor should employ their professional judgment to allocate a grade for the unit.
QAA Grading Guidance

• The QAA Grading Scheme Handbook an essential point of reference for understanding the application of Grading.

• Section B: Grading Descriptor Component Information

• Section C: Assessment and Grading Regulations
LASER Grading Guidance

• LASER guidance to support grading:
  
  • National Access Validating Agency Standardization Group Commentaries on Sociology assignments
  
  • LASER Independent IAS samples and commentaries
  
  • LASER Additional Guidance on Grading
  
  • LASER Assessment and Grading Basic Training Handout
  
  • LASER ‘Off the Shelf’ Assignment Briefs
LASER Templates

• LASER provides blank pro-forma templates for designing assessment / assignments (TA04 (a-b)) as well as providing feedback (TA05 (a-b))

• LASER also provides a template to help assessors calculate the final grade of a unit where multiple assessments are used (TA03)
Regulations around Grading

• Thus far we have looked at the mechanics of Grading…

• The QAA Grading Scheme Handbook Section C also contains detailed rules in relation to Drafts; Representations; Resubmissions; Referrals; Late Submissions; Academic Malpractice; Appeals and Numerical Marking

• These detailed regulations outline how submissions must be managed under specific circumstances…
QAA Translation (1)

- **Draft:** An initial attempt at an assignment before the final submission of the work.

- **Representation:** procedure to be followed where a student challenges one or more GD decision in relation to a marked assessment.

- **Resubmission:** If work fails to meet LO’s / AC’s on final submission the student is allowed one more chance to resubmit work in relation to the missing LO / AC… The work will still be graded!

- **Referral:** If a Resubmission fails to meet the LO / AC then it becomes a referral and is capped to PASS.
QAA Translation (2)

• Late Submissions: Only graded where a pre-arranged extension was in place or there were mitigating circumstances preventing submission… All other cases capped to Pass.

• Academic Malpractice: LASER Policy on this is available for Access Document Downloads… Please encourage centres to use the AQ9 Suspected Malpractice Report form.

• Appeals: Cannot be made in relation to grading (as this is a Representation)… Only applies in terms of mitigation / incorrect procedure (point of law / point of fact approach)

• Numerical Marking: Only applied to GD 1 and / or GD 3… As GD 7 is present in every unit a final grade can NEVER be tied to a number.
Conclusion / Over to You

• You should now have an overview of the application of the QAA Grading Scheme…

• Have a go at the ‘Starter for Ten’ questions on the Examples Sheet and see how you do???