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INTERNATIONAL ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

**22-24 June 2022
Manchester, UK**



**University of
CUMBRIA**

Parallel Session 2 (Room 11) 14:50 - 15:20 Wednesday, 22nd June, 2022

Presentation type Research or Evaluation Presentation Chair(s): Dai Hounsell

72 Authentic Assessment: Integrating professional and academic standards for coherent assessment in higher education

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Abstract

The multiple purposes of assessment in higher education include academic certification, quality assurance, student learning, developing students as lifelong self-regulated learners, and student employability (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). Authentic assessment in higher education motivates students and helps to embed development as a lifelong learner and employability into taught programmes. Authentic assessment arguably requires three elements: real-world practicality; cognitive challenge; and development of evaluative judgment (Villarroel et al., 2020). By 'evaluative judgment' we mean the capacity to analyse and judge quality of work within the subject discipline (Tai et al., 2018). Higher education assessment within professional fields, in this study we investigate accountancy and school-teaching, often involves professional standards formally maintained and enforced by professional associations or bodies. These professional standards are positioned in our study as boundary objects (Giroux, 1988). Across the university-employer boundary there is tension around the value of different kinds of knowledge and between academic and professional standards within authentic assessment. This may play out as different values placed by stakeholders on theory and research compared to the practical wisdom of expert practitioners. Stakeholders include academics, students, practice-based mentors, employers, professional bodies, and university managers. The tension is likely to be most explicit where students completing a programme gain accreditation against formal professional standards, for example to gain exemption from some professional body examinations as an accountant or to gain government approved qualified status as a schoolteacher. In assessment literature and practice, the term 'criteria' is used to refer to a 'property, quality, characteristic or attribute of a student response' whereas the term 'standard' refers to the level of quality (Sadler, 1987). A second distinction is made between analytic grading, separate qualitative judgments against criteria, and holistic grading, by which the assessor progressively builds up a complex mental response to student work or performance (Sadler, 2009). These distinctions are often blurred in the development and use of 'professional standards' by professional bodies or government agencies. This study is based on two case study undergraduate programmes in England, investigating the position of relevant professional standards within the programme assessment framework. A critical discourse analysis of the programme specification and of documents related to professional assessment focuses on three levels of: text; discursive practice; and social practice. Data was also generated through interviews with academics and focus groups with students and subjected to thematic analysis. The influence of professional standards within a programme may be strong and yet their position and role as a boundary-crossing assessment object may be uncertain and confusing. Our analysis suggests that professional standards require careful integration into programme assessment frameworks but as a dynamic and contested element of authentic assessment. This session aims to provoke thinking about the integration of authentic assessment into taught programmes and the coherent provision of criteria, standards, and effective feedback to support student learning.

Key References

Bloxham, S. & Boyd, P. (2007) *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education: a practical guide*. London: Open University Press.

Giroux H. A. (1988) Border Pedagogy in the Age of Postmodernism. *Journal of Education* 170(3): 162-181.

Sadler, D.R. (1987) Specifying and Promulgating Achievement Standards, *Oxford Review of Education*, 13(2): 191-209.

Sadler, D. R. (2009). Indeterminacy in the use of preset criteria for assessment and grading in higher education. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34: 159-179.

Poster & Pitch Presentations (Room 5) 15:40 - 16:40 Wednesday, 22nd June, 2022

Presentation type Poster & Pitch Presentation Chair(s): Linda Graham