



**Position Paper:
Assessment Standards in Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and
Tourism**

**Report of a workshop to identify and agree standards which could apply
to marginal pass work at level 6 in HLST programmes: Oxford, July 1st
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The Process of the Workshop

Ten Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism tutors from ten different institutions participated in an exercise to try determine characteristics of students' work which would warrant the award of a mark of just over 40% i.e. work which was perceived as being a marginal pass and therefore achieving threshold standards. Examples of final year undergraduate students' work which had been awarded a mark at the pass threshold, i.e. 40%, had been submitted prior to a meeting of the participants, although a couple of assignments had been awarded a marginal fail (it was felt that this was not a problem). The work had been submitted with a short commentary by original markers as to the reasons for the mark being awarded. Marking schemes were not requested.

The participants worked in two groups. One comprised academics from hospitality backgrounds and the second was made up of academics with a sport or leisure background. In each group, participants were asked to assess student work submitted by others teaching in the same subject area. The work had been anonymised, and participants were asked to read each assignment and prepare a short commentary on whether (and why) they agreed or disagreed that the work was a marginal pass. There was no discussion during this phase, and no reference to comments made by the original marker. As in the first workshop on 'firstness' in November 2009, assessment criteria were not normally seen.

After the process of marking, participants were asked to discuss the comments they had each made and to identify areas of agreement and those of disagreement as to the nature of the work they had assessed. From these discussions it was anticipated that a subject based consensus might emerge regarding the characteristics of work which was 'first class', and this was the focus of the facilitated plenary session.

Outcomes

Group 1: Hospitality

Interestingly, the group failed one assignment which had been awarded a pass, and passed another which had originally been failed. There was alignment in the other assignments between the group's assessment and the original mark for the assignment. They reiterated the points made in November about the significance to the process of explicit instruction - the clarity of the task brief and the assessment and performance criteria, although these deliberately again were not incorporated into the process. This group described the characteristics of each piece of work seen:

1. Very descriptive. Lacks integration of points with poor structure. Little critical thinking. Largely web-based references.
2. Highly descriptive in parts. Poor structure and poor grammar. Some application of knowledge and some currency in references but little evidence of understanding of knowledge.

3. Descriptive start but contextualised reasonably well. Some discussion but elements of repetition and lacking balance. Reasonably extensive reading but lack of journal articles.
4. Some engagement with the topic although limited understanding. Reasonable structure and progression. Attempts to compare and contrast differing views but is muddled and oversimplifies issues. Lacks some relevant aspects and is rather superficial in its treatment of the topic of leadership. Lacked background and current reading- reliant on two references Agreed fail.

There was consensus around the following points:

- The assignments marked were, generally, descriptive and did not move much beyond this level;
- They tended to follow the process required but lacked depth and were limited in their criticality;
- Referencing and how it was used was also limited;
- Any discussions and arguments lacked balance and coherence.

Group 2: Sport and Leisure

The group described the characteristics of each piece of work seen:

1. Largely descriptive, with very little critical reflection. No connection between theory and practice. Agreement with the marginal fail mark.
2. Also largely descriptive although it demonstrated the application of some relevant knowledge and used some limited sources to support this. It linked theory to practice, but in a cursory manner and it contained some reflective commentary but which lacked depth. Agreement with the marginal pass mark.
3. This assignment was seen to be highly descriptive and although the content was largely relevant, it was not explicitly related to the task.
4. This assignment, unlike the others, provided an introduction to the task, but was also descriptive with no reference beyond the introduction to the task and little connection between the various points. 70% of the weighting was for analysis and synthesis. Largely agreement with the mark.
5. This assignment involved some empirical work and its structure and content related to the task, but also had limited depth of analysis and interpretation. There was some discussion about the context of the degree and expectations of the work in relation to this context.

The group identifies the following aspects of commonality:

- All the assignments were largely descriptive. They contained some criticality but it was limited and they were more concerned with demonstrating knowledge than their understanding of it;
- Limited application of the knowledge presented although there was some contextualisation of the topic.
- Lacking depth and a clear argument.
Background reading was limited in extent and deployment.

The Characteristics of a Threshold Pass Standard

The discussions in the plenary session built on the reporting by each group and their commentary on the work that had been marked. Wide-ranging discussion on what is required at a pass level, and how this is communicated, ensued with the following features agreed to represent work at a marginal pass standard:

- There is relevant knowledge demonstrated; although
- It would lack criticality and clear application;
- It would be largely descriptive with limited interpretation of the content by the student and limited evidence of a personal position taken by the student. There would be some appropriate referencing but it would not be extensively or clearly deployed to defend or explain the answer;
- References would not just be brief but would have few critical texts and journal articles.

The Next Workshop

It was agreed that the Buckley Group would meet early in the next academic year to discuss the difference between a 2:1 and a 2:2, possibly focusing on the dissertation

(date confirmed for the workshop is October 8th).