Guidance for the assessment of work-based learning in Foundation degrees

A Report to fdf

Harvey Woolf and Mantz Yorke
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Orientation

Guidance for the assessment of work-based learning in Foundation degrees

1 Assessment is a challenging issue for Foundation degrees and for higher education programmes in general. Its complexity demands clear and rigorous thinking about purpose and practice. It therefore occasions no surprise that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) chose to place assessment prominently in its procedures for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER), as the first ‘Developmental Engagement’ in colleges (QAA 2008, para 32).

2 The challenge of assessment is greater for Foundation degrees than for many other programmes because of the deliberate linking of academic study and learning from workplace experience. Policy initiatives by government and employers mean that the relationship between education providers and employers is a matter of continuing debate in which the providers are required to consider how, and to what extent, achievements in workplace settings can be accommodated within frameworks for academic awards. This document flags up the issue, but acknowledges that there is much further work to be done on it.

3 Relatively little has been published that focuses specifically on the assessment of Foundation degrees. Relevant to the guidance offered in this document are a guide in respect of full-time Foundation degrees published by fdf (in which Section 7 deals with aspects of assessment) and the wide-ranging report written by Lyn Brennan⁷, which contains a multitude of references to assessment involving work-based learning generally, together with a set of case studies. Brennan’s report is included in a literature review of assessment related to work-based learning that was conducted as part of the present project by Paul Wells of Anglia Ruskin University (Wells, 2010).

4 In the latter half of 2009 the Student Assessment and Classification Working Group (SACWG)³ circulated an invitation to colleagues involved in the provision of Foundation degree programmes to indicate, via an electronic survey, what was being done regarding the assessment of work-based learning that was effective, different or innovative. The responses included a variety of assessment practices of sufficient interest to merit circulation beyond the originating institution. Evidence from the survey and from follow-up visits suggested that the assessment of work-based learning in Foundation degree programmes had required a measure of innovative thinking on the part of programme designers, in that they had had to look around for, and design, assessment methods that did not replicate traditional approaches. Work-based learning is a constantly evolving topic requiring appropriate quality assurance and enhancement activity.

5 The guidance offered here, which is intended for all those involved in the design, delivery and quality assurance of Foundation degrees, has three main sections.

- Eighteen Principles supportive of good practice in the assessment of Foundation degrees

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3 SACWG, a group of administrators and academics interested in assessment, has been researching assessment in higher education in the UK since 1994.
These are stated rather baldly, but provide a convenient summary for use in programme design and implementation. They are supplemented by:

- A relatively brief outline of the background to assessment in Foundation degrees, and
- A commentary which expands on a number of key issues in assessment.

These elaborations are intended to support institutions in the development of their assessment practices – particularly, but not exclusively, those relating to work-based learning.
These Principles are informed by available writings on assessment and also by the investigations conducted by SACWG in relation to Foundation degrees. They are provided as guidance to programme teams, which has to be interpreted and applied as is appropriate to the particular programme context.

1. Be clear about what you expect the students to achieve (i.e. the ‘aspirational standards’ of the Foundation degree), and hence about what you are assessing.

2. Confirm that the aspirational standards are broadly consistent with expectations of the Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark (FDQB) and Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), bearing in mind that Foundation degree programmes are expected to integrate academic and workplace learning.

3. Have an assessment strategy for the Foundation degree programme as a whole (see the relevant section below), which takes into account the ways in which students will be engaging with the programme. Part-time and full-time students, for example, are likely to differ in the way that they can respond to assessment scheduling.

4. Ensure that there’s a good match between pedagogic intentions and the assessment of student achievement (i.e. select methods of assessment that are the best ‘fit’ with what you want students to demonstrate: an essay may not be the most appropriate vehicle for demonstrating achievement, for example).

5. Ensure that the assessments, taken together, provide adequate coverage of the achievements you expect of your students.

6. Make sure that you are focusing assessment primarily on the most important of the intended learning outcomes, where institutional requirements permit some outcomes not to be assessed directly. (Assessment tasks will never cover all of the desired learning outcomes, so it is a matter of deciding on the outcomes whose assessment is essential, whilst taking into account those whose demonstration is desirable – see Principle 7 below).

7. Look for ways in which assessment can be made economical of effort (for both student and assessor) whilst covering the intended learning outcomes. This implies the possibility of ‘nesting’ some kinds of achievement within others, which may be as much an issue of curriculum design as assessment design.

8. Remember, too, that assessment must be affordable. Affordability and desirability of assessment method cannot always be reconciled.
9. Be clear about how you will deal with the variations in context in which students will be undertaking the practical/workplace aspects of their Foundation degree and about how these variations are to be factored into the assessment of the programme.

10. Take (considerable) care to ensure that students understand what is expected of them, and don’t assume that statements of intended learning outcomes are sufficient. Examples help students to appreciate what is really expected of them.

11. Be clear about the role(s) that assessments are performing (diagnostic; formative; summative)

12. Consider how finely you can justifiably grade achievements ...

13. ... especially bearing in mind how the assessments of the academic and practical/workplace components of the Foundation degree programme will be brought together at the end.

14. Ensure that the technical quality of your assessments is adequate for their purpose (e.g. that they are valid in respect of what you want students to demonstrate [see Principle 4 above], have reasonable reliability, and comply with any ethical requirements). Note that, in some programmes, ethical considerations may influence the assessment process.

15. Have a clear understanding of ‘who is responsible for assessing what’ in the Foundation degree programme, and of what can reasonably be expected of employers in this regard.

16. Develop the capabilities as assessors of those who will be involved in the assessment of student achievement (academic staff and employers). Expertise in assessing academic subject matter may not carry over into the assessment of work-based learning, and *vice versa*.

17. Do not fall into the trap of accepting unquestioningly, with respect to proposals for programmes, that ‘quality assurance won’t allow it’. If there is a sound case for the proposed assessment approach, then argue it forcefully.

18. Be clear about what is expected of the various quality assurance activities (e.g. double marking, where relevant; moderation; external examining), their aptness, and how they interlock.
Foundation degrees: a reminder of the context

7 Foundation degrees were launched in 2000 when HEFCE published a prospectus which set out expectations for this new qualification. HEFCW published a similar prospectus in the following year. Foundation degrees are located at Level 5 of the FHEQ. The FDQB was first published by QAA in 2004, and its second edition was published as QAA (2010b). The FDQB (para 11) points to the possible relevance of other documentation, including: the frameworks for Foundation degrees developed by some Sector Skills Councils; the requirements of professional bodies; and National Occupational Standards.

8 Foundation degrees are distinctive from other higher education programmes because of their requirement for work-based (or, in some cases, work-related) learning to be incorporated into the programme. Though the FDQB emphasises a range of technical matters, the intention that Foundation degrees should link academic and work-based learning is clear, as in the following:

*Foundation Degrees integrate academic and work-based learning through close collaboration between employers and programme providers. They ... are intended to equip learners with the skills and knowledge relevant to their employment, so satisfying the needs of employees and employers.*

(FDQB, para 14.)

The assessment of work-based learning brings into particularly sharp focus some challenges that all assessments face. The guidance in this document, whilst addressing issues relevant to Foundation degrees, nevertheless has resonance that extends well beyond them.

9 Foundation degrees are heterogeneous in nature, but then so are bachelor’s degrees. The heterogeneity of Foundation degrees is a consequence of the strong linkages they make to the world of work. Foundation degree programmes may be

- a consequence of an employer initiative or a reworking of an existing higher education programme by the institution in order to respond to expectations relating to workplace involvement
- ‘bespoke’ or generic in character (with the further twist that some of the more bespoke programmes incorporate expectations of third parties – for example, National Occupational Standards, requirements of professional and statutory regulatory bodies [PSRBs] and National Vocational Qualifications [NVQs])

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4 For an account of the development of the foundation degree, see Longhurst D (2010) Foundation degrees: 10 years on. *Forward Issue* 20 (March), pp.3-8.
6 See HEFCW (2001) Foundation degree prospectus. Cardiff HEFCW.
8 Work-based learning is used in this document as a generic shorthand for work-based and work-related learning. Some difference between the two on the grounds of their relationships with the world of work. The QAA Code of Practice, Section 9, para 14, suggests that too tight a definition of work-based learning and related concepts may be unhelpful. The issues relating to assessment are broadly similar to both, but may need some adjustment to fit particular circumstances.
• based on no relevant prior experience (they might be pre-registration programmes, for instance) or may be in- or post-experience in character (where the student can act to enrich their existing workplace capabilities)
• ‘shell’ programmes within which students can negotiate the intended learning outcomes
• studied on a full-time, part-time or distance-learning basis.

10 Further, some programmes have their first year (of full-time study) in a further education college and the second in a higher education institution (e.g. the FdA Project Management running under the auspices of the University of Wolverhampton), and some are based on three-way partnerships between a higher education institution, a further education college and an employer.

11 The expectations laid upon students seeking the award of a Foundation degree are challenging. The current QAA FDBQ states them as follows.

[H]olders of Foundation Degrees should be able to demonstrate:
• knowledge and critical understanding of the well established principles in their field of study and the way in which those principles have developed
• successful application in the workplace of the range of knowledge and skills learnt throughout the programme
• ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, and the application of those principles in a work context
• knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in their subject(s), and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in their field of study and apply these in a work context
• an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge in their field of study and in a work context.

Typically, holders of Foundation Degrees would be able to:
• use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis in their field of study and in a work context
• effectively communicate information, arguments, and analysis, in a variety of forms, to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively in their field of study and in a work context
• undertake further training, develop existing skills, and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume responsibility within organisations

and have:
• qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment and progression to other qualifications requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision-making
• the ability to utilise opportunities for lifelong learning.

(QAA 2010b, para 42)

12 From the perspective of assessment, these expectations embody significant challenges. The challenge is made more severe when the focus of the lens is narrowed to work-based learning.
Work-based learning

Work-based learning may have general aims or learning outcomes, but takes place in context-specific locations. It is the ‘situatedness’ of the performance that poses particular challenges in respect of assessment, since the expectations have to be stated at a level of generality that can encompass a variety of contexts whilst not being so loose as to be valueless. The fundamental question to any student in respect of work-based learning is ‘How have you achieved the learning outcomes expected by your programme?’ This kind of question invites the student to respond with reference to the particular work-based learning context that has been experienced: the emphases of the responses of two students in different work-based learning contexts may be quite different whilst remaining consistent with the broad expectations laid upon them. Of course, some Foundation degree curricula (for example, those incorporating National Occupational Standards) require a common specified standard of achievement to be achieved: competence in mammography, for example, is for obvious reasons mandatory.

The examples incorporated into this document have been drawn from some 50 responses to an on-line survey run by the SACWG following a couple of successful events run by the Group which focused on the assessment of work-based learning. Visits were made to five institutions (and covered seven Foundation degree programmes in all) in order to obtain a richer picture of the assessment practices in operation than was possible through the relatively restricted medium of on-line responses.

Assessment

The review of Foundation degrees published by the QAA in 2005 summarises strengths and weaknesses in assessment practices of programmes that were running in 2004-05. The review noted, in para 67:

The distinctive mix of academic and work-based learning presents a significant challenge to all providers in the assessment of students. Assessment is identified as an area of good practice or innovation in only a few cases.

Strengths identified in the review (para 68) were:

- assessment methods that are well matched to the ILOs [intended learning outcomes] and to the appropriate levels of the FHEQ
- an assessment strategy which is appropriate to measure the achievement of students, with arrangements in place to keep it under review
- assessment arrangements that are well documented and transparent
- the assessment of students in a real work environment, with employer involvement in the assessment of WBL modules
- appropriate support and guidance given to employers for their involvement in assessment
- evidence of thorough marking and moderation, which contributes effectively to consistency of practice within and across delivery sites
- encouragement given to students to develop their own assessment tasks, which are then approved by tutors.


10 Two conversations with course leaders were conducted by telephone.

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16 It was noted (para 70) that not all providers had aligned their assessment processes with Section 6 of the QAA Code of Practice, which deals with the assessment of students. The list of areas for development as regards assessment was rather longer than that of strengths (para 71):

- ensuring greater clarity of grading criteria and explicit links with the ILOs
- formal mapping of programme aims, ILOs and assessment
- consistency of assessment strategies, grading and moderation procedures
- attention to the security and effectiveness of assessment across consortia
- identifying an appropriate balance between methods of assessment
- clarifying the criteria for the assessment of individual students in the context of group project work
- placing greater emphasis on the integration of assessment with vocational, technical, practical and academic skills
- increasing the involvement of employers in the assessment process, including formative assessment and the setting and development of assignments
- supporting employers in contributing to assessment
- reviewing assessment information to ensure it addresses the different needs of students, mentors and employers
- ensuring the timeliness, quantity, consistency and quality of written feedback to students
- where distance-learning students study on the same programme as students who attend a college, ensuring that all students have equivalent opportunities in assessment to demonstrate achievement of the ILOs.

17 The significance of assessment for academic standards and the identification of assessment as the area most in need of improvement led the QAA to select assessment as the theme for the first developmental engagement, under the procedures for IQER, for colleges providing higher education programmes (QAA, 2008, para 32). A recent report on reviews of 41 colleges under IQER regarding Foundation degree provision between 2007 and 2009 (QAA, 2009) points to 14 examples of effective assessment practice and seven of helpful and timely feedback to students on assessment. Whilst this probably represents an improvement from 2004-05, the issues from the earlier report continue to have currency as markers that have value for those responsible for designing and carrying out assessments.
A commentary on assessment practice

18 The eighteen Principles are elaborated in the following sections. Most of the quoted examples come from Foundation degrees, but examples of practice from other kinds of programmes are also included where they may be of interest to those providing Foundation degree programmes.

Assessment strategy

19 The FDQB (para 47) states that

An assessment strategy should reflect the type of learning/learner and the nature of each element of study within the qualification.

An assessment strategy for a programme sets a framework within which are set the various assessment activities that are envisaged: Principle 3 asserts the need for such a strategy, and is buttressed by a number of the other Principles. The assessment strategy will, to some extent, be determined by the structure adopted for the programme. Modularised programmes deal with assessment in a different way from programmes that are not subdivided into units of study.

20 Issues to be addressed at the strategic level include:

- Deciding, in broad terms, what the focal points of assessment are (bearing in mind the need to demonstrate that, in Foundation degrees, academic and practical learning are expected to be interlocked – see Principle 13)
- Being clear as to how much assessment is expected (there is a tension between the desirability of frequent formal formative assessment and that of avoiding ‘assessment overload’ on both students and staff)
- Identifying who is to be responsible for what, as regards assessment (for instance, what role will employers play in assessment)
- Determining how the main intended learning outcomes are to be distributed through the programme, and how their coherence can be maximised
- Deciding on the balance between diagnostic, formative and summative assessment, and how that balance might vary across the span of the programme (Principle 11)
- Ensuring that summative assessment points are scheduled in such a way as to suit the needs of the students on the programme (making allowance, where appropriate, for the differing personal circumstances of full-time, part-time and distance-learning students – in other words, not operating assessment procedures according to a default assumption of full-time study which may be unsuited to the needs of those studying in other modes)
- Making due allowance for students with difficult personal circumstances (e.g. disability) so that they have a fair opportunity to show what they can do. Fairness is a more complex issue than is often appreciated
- What students can be expected to receive in terms of feedback, and how rapidly this feedback will be given.

21 Other aspects of assessment that need to be borne in mind are:
- The efficiency of the assessment process, i.e. maximising the ‘assessment value’ for the effort put in (by both staff and students): Principles 7 and 8 are of primary significance here, and are supported by Principles 4 and 5
- The ‘cheat-proofness’ of the assessment task. The ‘situatedness’ of work-based learning minimises the potential for cheating
- The utility of the assessment outcomes to interested parties
- Whether the assessment outcomes are intelligible to interested parties.

22 Collaterally, there may well be a need to develop assessors’ capabilities in respect of the assessor role.

23 Assessment strategy, as treated here, is a matter for whole Foundation degree programmes rather than programme components. Where the intention is substantially to blend the academic and practical, then this may not always be achieved by having the curriculum divided into self-contained modules. Before one gets to the issue of assessment, it is important to resolve the philosophical position of the programme – whether it is to be fully-integrated as regards academic and practical activities, or whether the different kinds of activity can be treated largely separately (with, perhaps, some kind of capstone requirement, such as a ‘project’, that draws the components together).

24 At a more pragmatic level (which applies much more widely than to Foundation degrees), there are issues concerning the way in which the various assessments throughout the programme fit together, and about the scheduling of assessments so that students are not faced with ‘feast and famine’ in terms of the demands made on them. Regarding the ‘fit’ of assessments, the question embraces the possibility of arranging assessment demands such that some can be met – somewhat incidentally – during the meeting of others. This might go some way to avoid the bunching of assignments which is a particular challenge for students who are combining work and study (and in many cases domestic responsibilities as well). Part-time and distance-learning students may be particularly disadvantaged by the bunching of assessments which may reflect an implicit norm of full-time study.

25 A study of part-time Foundation degree students’ experiences provided plenty of evidence of the challenges that assessment creates for part-time students. A few quotations from that study serve to illustrate the point:

Rushing to do assignments, at one point had 3 to hand in all in the same month, plus work deadlines to meet, quite a stressful time
(Male, 46-50, Engineering)

Working full time with a family and having to balance the amount of assignments given at the same time.
(Female, 31-35, Business)

Assignments week after week then none for up to month - poor timescales for marking and assignment feedback
(Female, 41-45, Veterinary Nursing and Animal Studies)

13 See the QAA Code of Practice Section 3 (revised 2010) and Section 6, both of which elaborate on the equity in assessment.
Flexibility regarding assessment demand can be valuable:

*This assessment is very flexible as the student can Mentor for a particular learning period, for a new member of staff, for a change of role. It has proved a very worthwhile Unit in the college.*

(Canterbury College, FD Management)

However, it has a potential disadvantage:

*The time scale for this module is extremely flexible to suit the students' workplace commitment. This can cause interesting questions where a student registers in one academic year and does not submit/complete until the following year.*

(Fire Service College, FD Fire Service Management)

There is a collateral point to be borne in mind, where flexibility in the assessment of work-based learning is concerned, there is a need for institutional administrative procedures, including the timing of examination/assessment boards, to cater for such flexibility.

**Be realistic**

Principles 6 and 7 point to the need to be very clear about what can be assessed and how assessments might be integrated – all with an eye to the resources that can be made available for assessment. This requires a programme-level focus since – for example – there is little point in duplicating assessment methods (such as presentations) in different curricular components. Lyn Brennan (2005, p.23) makes the point sharply when writing:

*As meeting far more descriptors and benchmarks becomes a requirement, particularly those relating to occupational competence, it becomes increasingly necessary to find ways of helping students to demonstrate their achievements without duplicating their efforts and without separate assessments of similar competencies.*

A key double-question, therefore, is 'What do we need to be able to confirm through assessment, and do we have the resources to achieve this?' The answers to the first part will, of course, reflect the nature of the particular Foundation degree programme and the requirements of interested parties. Since resources for assessment are always constrained (n.b. Principle 8), it is important to determine whether a proposed approach to assessment is 'good enough' for its purposes: rarely will an assessment approach be fully comprehensive.

**What’s being assessed?**

Principles 1, 3, 5 and 6 point towards the need to be clear about what is being assessed: Principles 1 and 2 focus on the standards of anticipated achievements.

The assessment of work-based learning can be based on:

- actual (live) practice,
- some sort of recording of practice,
- artefacts produced as a consequence of practice (e.g. mammograms),
- some sort of commentary on practice (ideally, reflective),
- some more general disquisition relating to practice, and/or
- combinations of the above.
The list embodies a spectrum of authenticity, as far as assessment goes. The circumstances of the curriculum may dictate limitations as far as authenticity is concerned. For example, there are limits to what can be assessed where live patients are involved:

*It is imperative for students to be able to be assessed in context. Unfortunately this belies patient care usually and so careful management of the learning experience is required.*

(University of Portsmouth, FdSc Paramedic Science)

Employers are often better placed than staff from educational institutions for assessing aspects of performance in the workplace, whereas the reverse is true for academic achievements, such as writing reflectively on experience. A small-scale survey run by SACWG in 2008 showed, unsurprisingly, that employers were more likely to be involved in the assessment of workplace achievements than on what was achieved off their premises (Table 1, lines 1 and 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who assesses</th>
<th>Educational provider</th>
<th>Employer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance on the job</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work performance not on employer’s premises</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project carried out in the workplace</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment based on learning gained from work experience</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio of work based on workplace experience</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-related assignment (e.g. essay)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Different aspects of achievement may need to be assessed by different people. For example, the workplace may be responsible for certifying that the student has reached an acceptable standard of practice, whereas the educational institution may assess the relationship of that practice to broader considerations:

*The skills log is signed off by the workplace mentor once competence is achieved. The portfolio is assessed by the practice educator in the last semester of the course.*

(University of Central Lancashire, FD Health & Social Care)

Missing from the tabulation are peer-assessment and student self-assessment. A focus on summative assessment can distract from peer- and self-assessment since these appear to be used more in formative assessment than in summative assessment, save where reflection on experiences is built into the assessment structure (as in portfolios). Three examples where peer- and self-assessment appear to be being used for predominantly formative purposes are:

*Peer group assessment and online mentor feedback which feeds into the assessment process.*

(Worcester College of Technology, FD Fashion & Surface Pattern)

*Have also used peer formative assessment in wbl modules.*

(University of the West of England, FdA Rivers & Coastal Engineering)

*Establishing a group network of support, self and peer assessment*  
(City of Wolverhampton College, FD Supporting Inclusive Practice)

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16 It is acknowledged that some colleagues’ roles straddle the workplace and the educational institution – for example, in health-related professions.
It should be noted here that ‘authenticity’ has to be interpreted with reference to the intended learning outcomes. Authenticity in respect of a workplace could, for example, cover not only the ability to undertake technical tasks but also the extent to which the student is able to work harmoniously with workplace colleagues. Authenticity can be demonstrated outside the workplace through the student’s capacity to reflect on, and learn from, their workplace experiences. This latter point hints at a challenging issue for assessors – to what extent can (should?) a poor performance ‘in the field’ become a good learning experience (demonstrated through reflective writing), and be acknowledged as such in the assessment process?

Assessment methodology

This section picks up some key issues in the assessment of work-based learning, but does not attempt to cover all the possibilities regarding assessment. Appendix 1 offers a list of methods which may be useful.

Complexity

Assessing the demonstration of achievement in workplace settings is a major challenge to which there are no simple responses, because of the ‘situatedness’ of the achievement. Principle 9 points to the need to determine how the inevitable variability will be accommodated in the assessment procedure. Where some form of external accreditation of competence is involved, there are prescribed standards of achievement to be met. The student either meets them or does not (or, in slightly different terms, is deemed to be competent or not yet competent).

The assessment of Foundation degrees is multi-faceted where both actual practice and academic studies are taken into account, as is encapsulated in the following example:

Students are assessed on clinical practice by practitioners. Proforma are provided for practitioners to complete, with a section for students to reflect upon their performance. These are a pass/fail element. Practitioners also complete an “appraisal” type form per assessment and/or placement – this is fine graded by the education provider. Students also complete a logbook throughout the duration of the course in which competence is signed off by practitioners. (Anglia Ruskin University, FdSc Radiotherapy and Oncology Practice)

Where the Foundation degree programme determines the acceptability of a student’s achievement without the application of an external framing, such as National Occupational Standards, the assessment methodology may allow some flexibility in the judgements made about student achievement. Weaknesses in some aspects of performance may be offset against strong aspects elsewhere – i.e. compensation can be applied. The judgement of achievement is broad – holistic, even – rather than atomistic. Employers, particularly, are more likely to prefer to make broad judgements on workplace performance, not least because of the possible confounding of the roles of mentor and assessor.
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Assessment of actual workplace performance

41 In some Foundation degree programmes the employer plays a significant part in the assessment of the students’ performance. In the Foundation degree in Police and Criminal Justice Studies (staffed at the University of Northampton by seconded police officers), for example,

Students enrol as Special Constables with Northants Police. They are assessed to exactly the same standards as a newly recruited police officer.
(Untiversity of Northampton, FdA Police and Criminal Justice Studies)

42 Another example of the close relationship between an employer and the educational institutions is demonstrated in the Foundation degree in Breast Imaging:

Assesses actual performance in the workplace and utilises workplace produced products [mammograms] as well as observational assessment of clinical performance, and social skills.
(Kingston University and St Georges University of London (Joint Faculty of Health & Social Care Sciences), FdSc Breast Imaging)

Note that, in this particular programme, assessment is carried out by

a workplace tutor from a clinical workplace other than the students’ own, who has fulfilled certain selection criteria and has been appointed by the HEI and accredited by the professional body.

This gets round the problem of the conflict of interest where a workplace mentor acts also as an assessor.

43 A number of programmes running in association with the public sector have to accommodate the requirements of an external body. These requirements may be set out in documentation which provides a structuring:

The use of a Practice Assessment Document utilised to assess the competence of the student paramedic in a range of clinical and advanced skills throughout years two and three of the programme.
(Untiversity of Greenwich, FdSc Paramedic Science)

44 The possibility exists of involving customers in the assessment of performance:

We have customers assessing the products ...
(Untiversity of Worcester, FD in Culinary Skills and Kitchen Management)

45 Sometimes, the educational provider has to be creative in its approach to assessment, such as when it is not possible to assess performance in an actual workplace:

The assessment is often not truly “work-based” as many students are not in a relevant employment. A substantial minority of students are self-employed: they develop bespoke website and software. When that is not the case, we encourage the students to take up an unpaid project.
(City College Norwich, FD Business Computing)

46 As the above example shows (and is well understood in respect of ‘new media’), it may be impossible to place students for work experience in small organisations. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, since a considerable amount of ‘contracting out’ of work takes place as a matter of course in ‘new media’ organisations. To undertake, from a base within the educational provider, project briefs from such organisations mirrors substantially the employment context.
Recollection may be a way around the difficulties associated with note-taking in situ, as in very sensitive placements such as prisons and hospitals. The Cambridge Theological Federation uses the following:

Students record their impressions (verbatim) after being in the placement situation and use these to build reflective analyses of the experience. This then forms part of the module assessment.17

The more closely the programme is tied to a particular employer, the easier it is to engender consistency in the employer’s assessment practice. Where multiple employers are involved, consistency across employers’ assessment practice is more difficult to achieve. The concern was noted in one response to the SACWG survey of 2008:

[Training of work-based assessors] has been a topic of conversation recently - the difference in grading between employers.

Yet the sharing of assessment practice across cognate programmes can be achieved, as is indicated by the following:

The Practice Assessment Document has been updated and modified following evaluation [by] the development group. Examples of this are incorporated into the College of Paramedics Educational Curriculum Framework and is now being used as a best practice document by HEIs delivering Paramedic degrees throughout the UK.

(University of Greenwich, FdSc Paramedic Science)

Whilst it might be desirable to involve employers to a greater extent in the assessment process, it is demanding of their time (especially where small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) are concerned) and there are potential difficulties with the mentor/assessor relationship. And, as one respondent to the SACWG survey of 2008 observed:

Involving employers more - but what is in it for them?

The issue of ‘what is in it for them?’ has presented itself quite sharply in the training of veterinary nurses at Harper Adams University College. This training involves 70 weeks in the workplace (typically a small organisation), which has to be recognised as a ‘training practice’. Training practices must have an in-house assessor (D32/33 or A1 qualified) who works alongside the student and assesses their competence against the veterinary nursing occupational standards. Only the assessor can confirm competency against the occupational standards (but others can act as witnesses), and the assessment has to be rigorously documented. The educational provider has a quality assurance role which encompasses regulations of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and the relevant assessment criteria. The direct costs of assessor training and quality assurance, together with the opportunity costs of managing documentation and supervising trainees, has led to some practice managers questioning whether they are running their businesses to make profits or to support nurse training. The consequence has been a diminution in the number of places available for veterinary nurse training.18

Self-assessment

Self-assessment is a major feature of many Foundation degrees, though it may figure indirectly in the summative assessment process. When SACWG undertook its survey of 2008, 52 respondents commented on whether student self-assessment contributed to the award of the Foundation degree: 19 said ‘yes’; 33 ‘no’, though data were not collected as to how this was implemented. This seems to be a higher level of self-assessment than emerged from the more recent survey conducted for this document, though this could be due to differences in the ways in which the questions were asked. The more students are involved in setting their own learning outcomes, then the more

17 See PowerPoint slide by Esther Shreeve, at http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml
18 See the PowerPoint presentation by Suzanne May at http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml
one might anticipate seeing student self-assessment. Also, any programme in which reflection is expected ought by extension to embody self-assessment to some extent. A consequential issue is how such self-assessment can be incorporated, whilst retaining confidence in the Foundation degree award. There is currently a shortage of examples of how self- and peer-assessment contribute to overall assessment outcomes.

The construction of portfolios (or other accounts of experience) ought to embody students’ reflections on their experiences (including an acknowledgement of what they have learned from others) and the implications that their learning has for future practice. The summative assessor is faced with the task of determining the veracity of the experiences (here they may be assisted by observations from employers) and the learning that has been engendered. To what extent might someone submit a well-written document that conceals a barrenness of learning (other than the demonstration of communicative skills), for example?

Assessing portfolios is demanding. It requires clarity regarding what has to be included and what has to be formally assessed (not necessarily the same thing). It may be necessary to delineate what in a portfolio would be considered as supporting evidence to which appeal can be made as deemed necessary. It is probably unnecessary to attempt to assess everything included in the portfolio – and the implications for staff time need to be borne in mind. David Baume’s (2001) guide is a helpful resource.

While the specific content of the portfolio will depend on the nature of the programme being assessed, the following from the University of West of England/City of Bristol College Foundation degree in Health and Social Care in Practice illustrates the types of evidence that are often included in a portfolio:

- Reflection
- Peer assessments
- Case studies
- Articles read and reflection on reading
- Professional Competence Framework sheets
- Reflection on training/continuing professional development (CPD) courses attended

The following examples illustrate different kinds of structuring that can be applied in respect of self-assessment activity. The first example is drawn from an Undergraduate Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy at the University of Leeds, rather than from a Foundation degree. Students were trained in the use of mobile devices which were taken on clinical placement.

[The students] were asked to complete mobile assessments which included feedback from practice assessors, peers, and, where appropriate, service users. Students were also required to reflect on their own experiences by way of self assessment. The students worked through a set of questions designed to help them reflect on and learn from their experience, either using the keyboard or stylus to type, or the audio record feature to capture their thoughts aloud. Students then requested practice assessor feedback, or peer or service user feedback, before reflecting again on the experience to develop an action plan to assist them next time.

Another example of structuring is the following.

The first assessment for the FD Travel Operations Management uses an Eportfolio as a reflective assessment where students consider their current skills, link these to their experiences in the workplace, and then create a skills development action plan, linked to both their workplace skills and those they require to complete their FD.

(FD Travel Operations Management developed by fdf)
Portfolios are increasingly being assembled as electronic documents (e-portfolios) which allow the inclusion of various sorts of electronic evidence. A further example is the following:

We are using Mahara, an online e-portfolio, to record student experiences, learning and reflective practice for a course module on personal effectiveness and professional development. The online e-portfolio captures real-time evidence of student experiences, both in the workplace and during the course, and reflections on what they learnt

(Worcester College of Technology, FD Business and Associated Pathways)

The National Policing Improvement Agency requires those on its Strategic Command Course to indicate three preferences from a set of sponsored topics for study in depth. One is assigned and has to be worked up independently as a 3000-word paper. The various independent papers on a particular topic are shared amongst those who tackled it, with the group being required to discuss them and come up with a composite which is negotiated with the sponsor and then presented. Participants are expected to conclude their work by summarising how their thinking has developed from their original essays, and might influence the development of the police service. The assignment embodies considerable structuring. Grading (by percentages) is against broad criteria which are banded in the traditional manner but, from the perspective of assessment approach, the key issue is the feedback received on the original paper and the opportunity to reflect on that feedback in order to develop thinking.

The University of Wolverhampton's Foundation Degree in Project Management, like many other programmes, relates self-assessment to the wider process of personal development planning as a further way of encouraging students to reflect on the work-based learning activities.

Peer assessment and the ‘Patchwork Text’

The ‘Patchwork Text’ approach to assessment involves students preparing (typically, but not exclusively, in writing) a sequence of ‘patches’ that are responses to tasks set with reference to a common theme, which are then sewn together in a reflective commentary on the totality of their learning related to the theme. A strong feature of the process is the sharing of work in learning sets: thus peer feedback is incorporated, and students can amend their pieces in the light of this feedback. From the assessment perspective, the significant issue is the building-in to the process formal peer assessment (even if this does not spill directly into the summative assessment). There is, perhaps, a temptation to envisage the Patchwork Text as requiring writing and discussion: Arnold et al (2009) illustrate how a diversity of media has been employed whilst remaining true to the original concept. Their paper indicates the importance placed on assessment as learning, and the negotiation of what is to be produced. As a parallel with word-limits and configurations on written work, there are limitations on file-sizes and formats for submissions: there is also a caution against being seduced by the ‘wow’ factor in the use of technology.

Student-generated learning outcomes

Some Foundation degree programmes consist of ‘shells’ which can encompass very varied student experiences. The students negotiate a set of activities which respond to a necessarily broad set of intended learning outcomes, and the criteria against which their achievements will be assessed. If, as in the FdA Project Management validated by the University of Wolverhampton, projects can encompass the development of non-destructive testing for satellite fuel tanks and the determination of a ‘best practice’ method for the auditing of mental health, the intended learning

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outcomes have to be specified in relation to the particular working context (within the overarching expectations for the programme as a whole).

63 Where the students construct learning outcomes, their engagement with the programme can be enhanced:

*Use of learning outcomes constructed by the students promotes effective engagement.*
(Uponiversity of Wolverhampton and Rodbaston Campus of South Staffordshire College, FDs in Equine Management and Amenity Horticulture)

64 At Canterbury Christ Church University, an assessment approach was needed that would allow students from a range of workplaces to demonstrate the linking of theory and practice. Employers and students jointly identified the learning that was to take place; the intended learning outcomes were embodied in a learning contract; and the student’s achievement of the outcomes was marked against sector skill requirements and their job description21.

65 The module guide for the FdSc in Health and Social Care in Practice run by the University of West of England/City of Bristol College stresses that students should treat their learning contract ‘as an ongoing baseline to structure the discussion of your performance, strengths and needs,’ rather than as a piece of paper that is signed at the start of the programme and then filed away never to be read again.

**Assessment of blogs**

66 Some use is made of blogs and discussion boards as a basis for assessment. This poses a number of challenges to assessors – not least the evaluation of the various contributions to the discussion topic, where loquacity may not correlate with quality.

67 The assessment of blogs is part of a blended approach in one Foundation degree programme:

*We have incorporated a range of assessments which blend online activities with evidence from the workplace. By promoting online engagement in tasks and debate from the start of their course, students are encouraged to view their blog discussion as a vital component of their assessment.*
(Uponiversity of Wolverhampton, FD Supporting Inclusive Practice)

**Simulations**

68 Objective structured clinical examinations [OSCEs] are a commonplace in medical education, where students are faced with ‘patients’ who are set up to simulate symptoms for students to diagnose. In some circumstances, simulation may not be necessary – for example, when the student is required to assess a set of radiographic images as in the Kingston University and St Georges University of London, (Joint Faculty of Health & Social Care Sciences) FdSc Breast Imaging. OSCEs are also employed in the University of Portsmouth, FdSc Paramedic Science.

69 Other kinds of simulation activity are employed in the assessment process, for example:

*Each student is required to adopt the role of a Mentor (Unit is Mentoring in the Workplace), the students have to complete a learning plan with their Mentee and the relationship is recorded from start to close. Various other tools such as action plans are introduced. Following the closure of the relationship period the Mentee submits a sealed assessment of the experience. Many of the Mentors are adopting different practices due to their experience of this Unit.*
(Canterbury College, FD Management)

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21 See PowerPoint presentation by Claire Thurgate, at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)
70 Close to actual simulation are the ‘challenge scenarios’ adopted in respect of anaesthetic practitioners at the University of Worcester, which is intended to assess [students’ higher thinking skills and ability to solve complex work-based problems. It is particularly appropriate as a supplement to direct observation. [...] Students had to complete an on-going skills log, assessed by an anaesthetist and then undertake a challenge, scenario based, oral assessment. The students were provided with an outline scenario, in advance, and then asked questions in relation to the scenario. The assessors were an academic from a relevant department of the University and a senior practitioner from the practice area.]

71 The Marketing unit in the University of Portsmouth FdA Business & Management runs an activity called ‘Chocolate Challenge’ in which teams of students have to decide on a new chocolate product and how it should be marketed. Each group has to give a presentation to a panel which includes a representative from a real chocolate manufacturer. This is essentially a problem-based activity which has the potential to be ‘serious fun’ for the students, and hence engaging. The assessment is by a portfolio which comprises:

1. A personal reflective learning log indicating
   - the key problems the group had to solve as a team
   - what research the team decided to carry out
   - the individual’s role and personal research they undertook with references
   - their experience of the activity
   - what they learned from the activity
2. A copy of the team presentation and team agreed product plan.

Technology in assessment

72 Technology is not used as an assessment method per se, but something that assists the practice of assessment in some way. It can help students provide evidence of achievement though in some settings (for example, where other people are involved) there will be ethical considerations to be taken into account before the equipment is used:

   The assessment is completed on a mobile device which the students take with them on clinical placements. The student may complete a self-assessment or request feedback from peers, practice assessors from their own, or other health and social care professions, and where appropriate service users. The multi-media functionality of the devices allow either text or audio responses - and students can also gather evidence of the skills and competences they have achieved by recording video footage. (University of Leeds, Undergraduate Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy)

73 ‘Pebblepad’ software is used in the ‘Reflective Practice’ module at the City of Wolverhampton College. The assessment of the module is a staged process:

1. Students are taught how to use Pebblepad.
2. Students are introduced to “blogging”.
3. Students are introduced to the assessment and working in small groups.
4. Students are asked to contribute to the blogs, using the web quest, making individual blog entries, and to try to elicit responses from each other.
5. Students are assessed on the quality of the individual blogs they produce.
6. Students are encouraged to use reflection activities to discuss incidents in their workplace. 

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22 See the PowerPoint slide by Ian Scott, at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)
23 See PowerPoint slides by Valene Cox, at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)
And, as was noted earlier, the ‘Patchwork Text’ can be given a distinctly technological slant.

Technology can be used in the provision of feedback:

*Have used audio feedback podcasts as well.*

(University of the West of England, FdA Rivers & Coastal Engineering)

Audio feedback in digital form has an advantage in that it can be replayed ‘on the move’ using a variety of devices. The informant’s colleague

... *did do a study on how audio feedback improved motivation and engagement but this was for another WBL module on [an undergraduate] course.*

In this instance, the task facility on the programme’s website was used by students to submit work electronically.

Technology, of course, supports the learning process as much as it does assessment:

*The assessment uses an online asynchronous discussion forum to assess an aspect of practice (including values based practice) and provides an opportunity for students to debate and contest or support aspects of the discussion content created by the students themselves.*

(Staffordshire University, FdSc Mental Health)

At Newman University College, creative use has been made of proprietary survey software to collect peer assessments of individuals’ presentations. The advantages claimed include:

- *Reduced work load for the lecturer, with just a spreadsheet to manipulate.*
- *Students get to see each others’ work.*
- *Students get a presentation on aspects of a subject they did not examine (assessment becomes a learning experience).*
- *IT students use IT to present and assess work.*

*fdf* itself facilitates on-line discussion forums which are

*used to support and assess students working to complete a Foundation degree from within companies in the travel and retail sectors where the workforce is widely geographically distributed (nationally and internationally) and all students are engaging with their learning via a blended approach that utilise shared VLEs (“online classrooms”). Via the “classrooms”, students have access to a custom built, integrated e-portfolio and VLE functionality. The “classrooms” are accessed via public web sites and are managed by *fdf* and used by a network of HE institutions to support their delivery of WBL. The online discussion feature of the systems can be used to encourage students to share, develop and refine their understanding and opinions about a range of topics and learning points and to facilitate assessment.*

**Guidance for students regarding what is expected of them**

Students in general will achieve better outcomes if they have a clear understanding of what they are being expected to do (Principle 10). Respondents to the survey indicated a number of ways in which students were apprised of the expectations being made of them, ranging from relatively simple statements of expectations or provision of

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24 See PowerPoint slide by Peter Chapman, at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)

25 See PowerPoint slide by Helen Dewhurst, at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)
assessment criteria to high levels of engagement in helping students to appreciate what the expected standards actually are. A report by QAA (2009) praised a number of colleges for the clarity with which they communicated their expectations to students (see paras 20-22).

Wolf (1995) demonstrated that mere statements of expectations are insufficient on their own to convey the meaning that is really intended: examples are needed to illustrate how the assessor anticipates that the student will approach the assigned task.

Some of the quotations below blur the distinction between advice offered prior to an assessed task and formative feedback during or on completion of the task. Ideally, such tutorial advice is an ongoing process, and not one that is limited to a particular time-slot. The quotations reflect what the respondents chose to say, and in some cases (at least) probably leave out other ways in which students are supported in achieving the intended learning outcomes. The categorisation below is therefore somewhat arbitrary.

Advice prior (or largely prior) to the assignment

The student is taken through the Practice Assessment Document when issued it at the commencement of year two, and the document is explained to them in entirety. (University of Greenwich, FdSc Paramedic Science)

Access to the marking guide, clear instruction as to what is expected including access to National Occupational Standards on which some of the assessment is based. (University of Central Lancashire, FdSc Criminal Investigation)

The tool points to the national occupational standards and codes of practice that may be covered. An example is given of what it might look like when filled in from a practice experience. (University of Leeds, BA(Hons) Social Work)

Tutorial support, particularly at proposal stage. Written advice sheets, web-site support. Telephone tutorial. Tutor proofing of 1 draft. (Fire Service College, FD Fire Service Management)

Fully briefed prior to work based learning module. Students are familiar with assessment criteria as [they are] well emphasised throughout the course. (University of Northampton, FdA in Police and Criminal Justice Studies)

Students are shown an example of an assessment at induction (delivered on site) and are provided with grade criteria and a blank feedback sheet. A study day is also arranged as an assessment guidance session. (FD Travel Operations Management developed by fdf)

Clearly written assessment criteria. (University of Wolverhampton, FD Business Management)

Briefing sheet and module guide. (University of Wolverhampton, FD Small Business Management)
Advice largely during the assignment

Through a detailed workplace learning handbook, module handbooks, tutor support, classes and Skype support sessions.
(University of Bradford, FDs in Community Justice and Leadership & Management)

The students receive guidance during classroom sessions and in peer group supervision sessions. The asynchronous discussion forum commences with a formative ‘trigger’ and the students are given individual feedback - both verbal and written. This is followed by three discussion topics that are summatively assessed with each student receiving formative guidance after the completion of each discussion topic. No indicative grade is given until the completion of the assessment.
(Staffordshire University, FdSc Mental Health)

Provision of much scaffolding for students in all aspects of the module including a fictitious student who creates and presents examples of work on Mahara for review.
(Worcester College of Technology, FD Business and Associated Pathways)

Students are provided with weekly sessions in University to support the development of their portfolio evidence. This includes the formative assessment described earlier. They have regular meetings with their practice and academic mentors in the workplace to identify areas for development and monitor progress on the achievement of competencies.
(University of Teesside, FD Healthcare Practice)

VLE tutorial, simulated practice, competence escalation within the workplace.
(University of Portsmouth, FdSc Paramedic Science)

Formative comment on drafts

Exemplars on the website. Mentor and academic support - progress reviews. Submission of Planning Documents, Report Structures and Draft Reports. Have used audio feedback podcasts as well.
(University of the West of England, FdA Rivers & Coastal Engineering)

Extensive support

There are a number ways in which [distance learning] students are supported with their assessment. To begin with, students are introduced to the assessment during their face-to-face induction week where they will also be presented with Turnitin, the system used for assessment submission. The assessment itself will be issued as a hardcopy but can also be found online. Guidelines with regard to the expected content and style will be included. The quick-view / info function, at the start of each session, indicates how the session is linked to the assessment. In addition, many of the actual tasks and resources have been created to support the assessment. There is, for example, a research task ... which can be considered a dry-run for the assessment and an interview has been conducted with the General Manager of a Boutique Hotel in London, which is the hotel category to be investigated in the assessment. Individual as well as group assessment workshops and tutorials have been scheduled and marked in the ‘what’s when’ calendar. Students are also given the opportunity of submitting a draft. As well as online tutorials and assessment workshops, students receive assessment support by the course tutor, face to face, once a week. One of the face-to-face taught modules in the first term...
Includes research skills, which will support students with any necessary assessment research. Finally, the generic research box and the student VLE offer a range of links to academic writing, study and research skills.
(Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College, FdA in Front Office Operations & Management)

Feedback during and after the assignment or assessed task

Feedback on students’ work has been a longstanding issue in UK higher education. The National Student Survey has shown consistently that feedback is the least positively-rated aspect of students’ experiences, and a slew of reports from QAA has pointed to the need for a stronger ‘feedforward’ contribution to student learning. As regards Foundation degrees, as in higher education generally, the position seems to be improving. In its most recent review of Foundation degree provision, QAA identified ten examples of good feedback practice in programmes running in seven colleges:

*In the main, where feedback was identified as good practice, such formative feedback was found to be provided both in writing and verbally, was detailed and of a high quality, and was sufficiently constructive to support and contribute to informed student learning. Marked work was also returned to students on time. (QAA 2009, para 25)*

However, in the following paragraph, 17 recommendations were noted, which related to feedback in eleven colleges. A specific comment was made regarding the need for equity of treatment, as regards feedback, for part-time students.

The survey conducted prior to the preparation of this document showed considerable variation in the way that feedback is provided on students’ achievements. Sometimes the feedback is on an interim achievement, sometimes on a completed item of work. In the case of the former, the feedback is likely to be informal and exclusively formative: in the case of the latter, the formative and summative may be blurred together. Feedback may be provided by a person from the workplace and/or a person from the educational institution.

The variation in the provision of feedback is to be expected: there is no ‘best buy’ in respect of feedback, since the circumstances will dictate the most appropriate form(s). An observed performance often attracts immediate oral comment from the observer, which is typically followed by the provision of a handwritten or electronic commentary (and, more rarely, via audio commentary, as in a podcast). An immediate response is not feasible when the assessed task takes the form of a submitted assignment, whether in written or other format, since the assessor has to take time to evaluate what has been submitted.

Grading

A variety of approaches to grading is in use in Foundation degrees, judging by the current survey and the earlier SACWG survey. The work-based learning component of Foundation degrees tends to be assessed in pass/fail terms (particularly in the case of competence and practice elements), but the academic aspects are usually graded on a finer scale, sometimes as finely as (so-called) percentages. The following example illustrates the point:

*Pass/fail for clinical assessments and logbook, percentages for appraisal*
(Anglia Ruskin University, FdSc Radiotherapy and Oncology Practice)
The overall grading for the Foundation degree, when not simply a pass/fail choice, is usually determined by the grading awarded for the academic work.

Principle 12 points to the need to consider how fine grade discriminations need to be. An argument can be made for limiting grading to a relatively small number of bands. BTEC used a four-point scale of distinction/merit/pass/fail. If this terminology were felt to be too redolent of past practices, banding might take a form such as outstandingly competent/highly competent/competent/not yet competent. An analysis of the effect of using a small number of grading categories compared with ‘percentages’ showed that it made little difference to the overall grading. On this evidence there seems little to justify the sometimes exhaustive and exhausting efforts to arrive at a percentage grade for a piece of work. The import of this study is that it may be worth considering what kind of grading scale is best suited to the Foundation degree programme. One reaction might be to say that institutional practice as regards grading determines the grading system used for Foundation degrees. However, if Foundation degrees are different kinds of qualification from – say – bachelor’s degrees, must it necessarily follow that the approach to grading should be the same, given the need to blend academic achievements and achievements in the workplace (see Principle 13)?

The grading of achievements in workplace settings is particularly taxing, since workplace demands are likely to vary considerably, in terms of both formal requirements and the working environment in which the work is being carried out. It is probably unrealistic to think in terms of anything other than broad grade categories. The experience of some Foundation degrees is that workplace assessors prefer to grade on a pass/fail basis – no doubt in part reflecting the heterogeneity of workplace contexts, and in part reflecting the implicit social constraints on grading more finely (the latter point being strengthened when workplace mentors have to attest to the demonstration of competences, for example).

A small-scale investigation of the use of ‘rubrics’ in Australian vocational education involved the construction of a matrix of competences and levels of achievement. Whilst a rubric was found to be helpful in focusing on assessment practice, the students’ overall level of achievement was determined by the summation of awarded points: what the exercise seemed to be lacking was an indication of a distinction between ‘essential’ and ‘desirable’ competences – in programmes involving public safety, such a distinction would be vitally important.

Some students are unhappy with pass/fail grading:

*Using a pass/fail approach demotivates some good students as they see that poorer or less well prepared students still pass and they are not given recognition for extra effort.*

(Thames Valley University, FD Credit Management)

It is unclear whether the unhappiness relates to the award for the programme as a whole, or to components of the programme that are graded pass/fail. Whichever is the case, the unhappiness may reflect an excessive trust in the capacity of numbers to inform, since the desired recognition ought to be manifested in comments made by assessors about the strengths and weaknesses of the submitted work.

A bigger issue lies behind the choice of grading scale. Where the work-based learning component is graded pass/fail and the academic work is graded more finely, and the overall grade reflects the grading of the academic component (assuming a pass on the work-based learning component), the academic work is being privileged over the work-based learning component. It is open to question whether this is consistent with the broad aims of the Foundation degree qualification, since the general approach seems to reflect traditional practice in respect of bachelor’s degrees rather than to break out of what could be considered to be an inappropriate assessment paradigm. If a Foundation degree is supposed to blend the academic and the practical in a new way, should not the assessment approach

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26 With the exception of the combination of sub-module grades into an overall module grade, where differences seemed to be due mainly to generosity in operating compensation for non-passing performances in the original institutional data. See Yorke, M. (2010) How finely-grained does summative assessment need to be? Studies in Higher Education 35 (6), pp.677-689.
reflect this? Against the argument, however, the banner of ‘the maintenance of standards’ is likely to be waved by those who would see some sort of dilution taking place. In rebuttal of this potential challenge, the Foundation degree asks learners to make a different response to the relationship between theory and practice, often starting with a practical situation and developing understandings and solutions from there instead of learning theory and seeking to apply it in practice.

97 Some programmes have found it necessary to devise comment/grade recording forms to meet their particular needs. The FdA Police and Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Northampton, for example, has developed a Placement Summary Sheet on which the assessor has to identify, from a list of 44 behaviours, the five most appropriate to the individual’s performance. Each behaviour is coded against one of the following categories: F – Fail, P – Pass, M – Merit, D – Distinction or a borderline (e.g. F/P) between two neighbouring categories.

98 Associated with the issue of grading is that of recording student achievement in a way that is useful and intelligible to interested parties. Developments related to personal development planning (PDP), transcripts and the Higher Education Achievement Report are moving recording towards the provision of greater detail, though more needs to be done to deal with the relationship between individual achievement and expectations regarding standards.

Some technical considerations

99 Summative assessments have to be at minimum adequate and preferably as robust as possible (Principle 14 is relevant here). What, in the context of Foundation degrees (and, in particular, work-based learning), does ‘robust’ imply? The ‘measurement’ approach to assessment (which is influenced by psychometric methodology) emphasises the following.

- Validity – does the assessment task test what it is supposed to test?
- Reliability – are the test outcomes replicable?
- Objectivity – does the assessment avoid the intrusion of subjectivity?
- Generalisability – is the assessment outcome of broad applicability?
- Low ‘reactivity’ – does the assessment activity avoid influencing the assessees’s behaviour?

The assessment of some aspects of Foundation degrees responds to these aspects of robustness, especially where there are defined standards or competences against which assessment is undertaken.

100 However, other aspects of Foundation degrees require a more judgemental approach to assessment, especially where they are context-specific, such as in work-based settings. Full ‘objectivity’ is probably too demanding an expectation in the assessment process, and reliance may have to be placed on judgements of achievement, perhaps from more than a single assessor. The closest one might get to objectivity is multiple subjectivities – do assessors agree on (i.e. mutually confirm) the achievements? Achievements – especially those in the field – cannot be replicated exactly, because settings vary. Hence reliability needs to be given a qualitative colouring, rather than a quantitative one: does the student produce broadly similar performances in different settings – which begins also to deal with the ‘generalisability’ issue, though ‘transferability’ is arguably a more appropriate term. It is important to acknowledge that judgements cannot be ‘perfect’, in that they cover all possible aspects of a student’s performance: the key issues are, first, to ensure that they are ‘good enough’ for the purposes to which they will be put and, second, to be clear about the limitations of the assessment process.
‘Reactivity’ is worthy of some consideration, particularly (but not exclusively) where work-based settings are concerned. Assessment in work-based settings typically evolves over time from being highly formative to summative in character. Formative assessments in workplaces can be (and probably are) informal as well as formal. The reactions of workplace colleagues may be as informal as a raised eyebrow or a grimace: the alert student notes the cue and can infer the meaning (or inquire about it). Formative assessment, however undertaken, is deliberately ‘reactive’ in the technical sense. Summative assessments, too, have a ‘reactive’ element, in that students may learn from the outcomes and seek to improve any weaknesses that have shown up.

The ‘measurement’ and judgemental approaches to assessment are often not as sharply differentiated as presented here: the boundaries between them are in reality quite blurred. The reason for drawing attention to the differences is to assist in the development of assessment methodology that is ‘good enough’ for the programme under consideration: rarely will the methodology reach perfection.

Assessor capability

Sections 6 and 9 of the QAA Code of Practice point to the importance of assessors being competent to engage in assessment practice. Section 9, pp.11-12, notes that, as part of Precept 1,

"... it is important that all of those involved in the formal assessment of students are competent to fulfil their roles and understand their responsibilities. Training provided by the awarding institution can help to ensure that this role is carried out effectively. It may be important, therefore, to ensure that standard institutional practices take account of the particular requirements of those awards that include work-based or placement learning and that the awarding institution has oversight of all those who are involved in such assessment, including the moderation of assessment and the participation of assessors in decisions about credit and awards."

This is indeed challenging, and developmental initiatives may be needed (Principle 16).

Whilst assessors from educational institutions may be well-informed about assessment practices relating to their academic specialisms, this may be less likely to be the case where the assessment of workplace performances is concerned. For some, the latter could be, metaphorically, ‘assessment in a foreign language’ in that the performances are of a nature different from that of a subject specialism and – in addition – have to be assessed with reference to the particular setting. This rather starkly-presented dichotomy does not of course apply where the assessor bridges between the educational institution and the workplace, as in various health-related and educational programmes. In broad terms, and with the caveat of the preceding sentence in mind, a general depiction of the levels of confidence that assessors may hold in respect of the assessment of achievements is suggested in Figure 1, where the deeper the shading, the greater the confidence. In particular programmes, the shadings may not be a good representation.

Figure 1. A schematisation of assessor capability in respect of differing kinds of student achievement.

The darker the shading, the greater the likelihood of assessor capability.

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<th>Academic work</th>
<th>Learning from workplace experience</th>
<th>Workplace performance</th>
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<td><strong>Academic staff</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Employers</strong></td>
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Assessment is a more complex and nuanced activity than some appreciate, and despite recent developmental work (notably in Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, CETLs) and the availability of A1 and V1 awards in respect of NVQs28, more can be done to induct assessors into relevant practices.

Some employer-based assessors will have acquired A1 or V1 qualifications, or some other qualification including an assessor-training component. Many will not have gained this type of qualification, which raises the question of the extent to which training of workplace assessors can be implemented.

Among those who responded to the relevant item in the 2008 SACWG survey (N=43), there was an even split as to whether the educational institution trained workplace assessors (‘yes’ 22; ‘no’ 21). There were three broad levels of training by the educational institution, starting with the most thorough:

1. Actual training of workplace assessors.

   [Training of work-based assessors] This is done via a Supervisor who is the link person between the education provider and the clinical department.
   (Anglia Ruskin University FdSc, Radiotherapy and Oncology Practice)

   Some mentors and workplace supervisors, who have a formative role, are also trained:

   We prepare work-based mentors for their role.
   (Oxford Brookes University, FD Construction Management)

   and the Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing at Anglia Ruskin University provides support to supervisors (who have a formative role) via a manual, courses, and communication by phone and e-mail29.

2. Reliance on workplace assessors’ previous training.

   No examples specific to assessors were provided, though one in respect of mentorship was, so at least the formative aspect of assessment was covered (and this may have spilled over into summative assessment):

   [We] use existing mentors for nursing who have done mentorship course but not specific to Foundation degree.
   (Anglia Ruskin University, FdSc Health (Associate Practitioner))

3. Provision of written guidance to workplace assessors.

   Examples (unattributed) of the provision of written guidance are as follows:

   Mentors have handbook and invited to college meetings.

   [Work-based assessors are given a] grading sheet to help contribute to discussion.

This last category seems to be an insufficient response to the QAA’s expectations as set out in the Code of Practice. Where the foundation degree programme consists of a partnership between the educational institution(s) and an employer, it ought to be straightforward to arrange developmental activities for the various people involved in the assessment process. Where a multiplicity of employers is involved, this becomes more difficult, and the solution may be to take all the summative assessment ‘in house’ in the educational institution(s).

In setting up a Foundation degree programme, a key issue is to determine ‘who is going to be responsible for what’ as regards the assessment of student achievement (Principle 15). As a recent report from QAA (2010a) notes, workplace mentors are often particularly well-placed to assist with formative assessment. Summative assessment,

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28 Earlier versions are known as D32 and D33 awards.
29 See PowerPoint presentation by Sue Southgate at http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml
however, is more problematic because of the potential conflict of interest (noted earlier), though certification of competence may be appropriate (and where the certifiers’ expertise is recognised by the relevant organisation). The Foundation degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing at Anglia Ruskin University makes it explicit that the employer (in this case, Specsavers) is responsible only for formative assessment: summative assessment is a matter for the University.  

110 In many cases, negotiation is needed between the educational provider(s) and the employer(s) as to what each should contribute to summative assessment, and what developmental activities will be needed for this to be undertaken with appropriate rigour. Partnership in relation to assessment has cost implications that need to be factored into the projected curricular financing.

**Employer engagement issues**

111 In setting up a Foundation degree programme, institutions need to be clear about the extent to which they can expect employers to contribute to the assessment of students, and the extent to which these employers will be able to ensure that work-based assessors have appropriate expertise (see, particularly, Principles 15 and 16). The responses from employers will vary widely, from those in which there is a close (perhaps bespoke) relationship between the educational institution and the employer and where the Foundation degree programme is more generic in that it draws students from (or places them in) a variety of employers. A key question to have in mind is ‘What’s in it for the employer, if they are expected to engage in the assessment process?’ Some employers, such as SMEs and single person businesses, will simply not have the capacity for involvement in assessment, in which case the assessment will lie entirely with the educational institution – with consequences for what can reasonably be expected as regards assessment. For example, it might be necessary to limit assessment to reflective portfolios covering experience instead of assessing actual workplace performance.

112 Mentorship from employers is a valuable component of work-based learning. This is widely acknowledged in respect of students’ development, but it is less well appreciated that mentoring can play a developmental role in respect of employers’ staff. A recent survey carried out for the CBI indicated that roughly one in three employers believed that

> [b]eing given responsibility for supervising and helping youngsters on work experience can be a good opportunity for employees to develop their own skills. (CBI, 2010, p.31)

This view was strongest (41 per cent) among the smallest employers, where there are fewer opportunities to give staff mentoring responsibilities. Whilst the CBI survey focused on the links between business and schools, the mentoring ‘message’ is of wider relevance.

113 Many programmes overtly acknowledge the importance of specifying the role of the mentor. The University of West of England/City of Bristol College’s Foundation degree in Health and Social Care in Practice, for example, includes the following in its course documentation.

**The Mentor**

The mentor will help the student to determine the level of competence that can realistically be expected in whatever practice area and level they are working in. They have the responsibility for the student learning experience, ensuring the following:

a. To meet with the student to agree the learning contract, action plan and learning outcomes / dimensions to be achieved.

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30 See PowerPoint presentation by Sue Southgate at [http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml](http://web.anglia.ac.uk/curriculum/sacwg.phtml)

b. To review and verify student evidence to support achievement in practice, at both formative and summative stages of the module.

c. To ask for additional evidence in areas already achieved, where students fail to maintain achievement in the care context.

d. To provide constructive feedback through formative and summative meetings, which enables the student to consolidate learning and identify continuing learning needs.

e. To complete the summary boxes for dimensions achieved against the benchmarks ..., ensuring students are competent to practise in relation to the [Key Skills Framework] dimension undertaken.

f. To liaise with the named academic throughout the process.

g. To highlight to the Foundation degree/Trust Co-ordinator and academic any changes in the clinical experience that would affect the capacity of the clinical area in order to meet the outcomes of the educational programme.

h. To assess Component A, the portfolio.

The contribution of mentoring to formative assessment was attested not only in the on-line survey undertaken as a background to this document but also in a recent survey of part-time Foundation degree students\textsuperscript{32}. Mentors are less frequently used in the summative assessment process, in recognition of perhaps two considerations. The first is the conflict of interest that would exist between the roles of ‘coach’ and (summative) assessor, and the unhappiness that some mentors might feel about the conflation of roles. The second is the probability that some might not possess the expertise to be comfortable in the role of assessor in a ‘high stakes’ assessment situation. That said, there is a well-established tradition in health-related studies and education for the roles of mentor and summative assessor to be combined: the ground-rules are generally well understood, and students are aware when the person is in mentoring role and when summatively assessing\textsuperscript{33}.

Quality assurance

Principle 18 points to the need for clarity regarding quality assurance. The quality assurance processes through which a programme proposal has to pass should pick up a number of the issues discussed earlier in this document, such as the ‘fit’ of assessment methodology to curricular objectives/aims. In setting out the assessment strategy and practicalities, it may be particularly important for a foundation degree proposal (because of its deliberate interlinking of the academic and the practical) to address the question of how creative the programme might be as regards assessment. Principle 17 warns of the risk of being hogtied by presumptions of ‘what QA(A) wouldn’t approve’\textsuperscript{34}, experience elsewhere has shown that, provided that there is a clearly articulated rationale for what is proposed, programme designers can be more imaginative as regards assessment than at first they might have believed.

The issue of standards is particularly challenging where students, in one way or another, undergo varied experiences in the same programme. There is always a temptation to codify the possible performances in detail, as did a discussion paper put forward by the Australian Universities Quality Agency\textsuperscript{35}. An extract from that document is revealing.

\textit{Most Australian institutions have developed general learning outcomes (‘generic attributes’), in addition to the discipline-specific ones which are used to define students’ experiences, and therefore achievement, at that institution. These attributes need to be measured and graded. In the absence of}


\textsuperscript{33} The same point applies in respect of student projects and dissertations at bachelor’s level when the supervisor acts as an internal assessor.

\textsuperscript{34} The reference is to both institutional quality assurance requirements and those of the QAA.

\textsuperscript{35} See Australian Universities Quality Agency (2009) Setting and monitoring academic standards for Australian higher education (Discussion paper). At \url{www.auqa.edu.au/qualityenhancement/academicstandards/discussion-papers.pdf}.
a rigorous assessment approach to such tasks, they are not likely to be valued by students. Introducing standardised and understood methods of assessing and grading these attributes, at the level of difficulty appropriate to the stage of the learning process, ensures that students better understand why they must learn particular things and also provides meaningful evidence to use as part of their future career activities. (AUQA, 2009, p.12)

Yet the same document argued that

... valid and feasible approaches to reporting are vital to the success of a standards- and achievement-focused approach to continuous improvement and quality assurance. It is vital, for instance, that reporting respects the complexity and distinctiveness that is essential to innovation and learning while at the same time facilitating interpretations of the relative standing of achievement. (AUQA, 2009, p.15)

– in other words, trying paradoxically to combine the need for commonality in standards with the need for distinctiveness in achievement. The argument of the present document is that the paradox can only be resolved by working with intended learning outcomes that are stated at a sufficiently broad level that they can cater for variation in the ways that students respond to them.

Commonality of standards is most closely approached where external organisations specify standards or competences, such as through National Occupational Standards or PSRB requirements. However, the application of such standards may apply to only part of a Foundation degree programme. In the Foundation degree in Police and Criminal Justice Studies at the University of Northampton, for example, it is possible to gain the award but without having passed muster as a special constable – in which case the student would be ineligible to enter the police but could, say, continue into the final year of a bachelor’s programme.

Moderation and related matters

Internal and external moderation involves the comparison of the standards set and achieved within programmes and across programmes in order that those outside higher education can be assured that standards are being maintained, and that students can be assured that the assessment of their work has been fair and consistent. This is challenging where programmes are broadly comparable. It is more challenging when students undertake work-based activities, especially when these take place in (very) varied situations. While there is a tradition of external examiners visiting placement students in teaching and health to sample internal assessors’ judgements on work-based performances, this practice does not appear to have extended to other curriculum areas. Thus, how, for example, might a moderator gain access to workplace assessment, as distinct from the students’ reflection on their workplace learning? Some form of recording (video and/or audio) is feasible in some circumstances, but not where the performance is assessed over a period of time. Even where visits can be arranged for internal and/or external moderators, what might constitute a reasonable sample of visits? How feasible is it to expect a moderator to take meaningful account of workplace variability? The current versions of the QAA’s FDBQ (2010b) and its Code of Practice Section 9 on work-based and placement learning (2007), Section 6 on the assessment of students and Section 4 on external examining (2004) do not contain any specific guidance on the operation of the moderation of work-based learning, despite various nods toward its importance. However, the QAA’s present review of the Code may modify this. In the absence of such guidance, course teams should consider how moderation can be undertaken so as to sample adequately from varied work-based settings, and to assure the comparability of standards – two particularly challenging aspects of the assessment process.
The survey suggests that the Foundation degree programmes have adopted their institutions’ standard internal and external moderation arrangements. However, a few responses to the survey seemed to indicate some blurring of perspective regarding double marking and internal moderation, which suggested that the former replaced the latter. This, though, could be an artefact of the way in which the question relating to moderation was posed. The following quotations generally do not fit neatly under specific headings, so the grouping is fairly rough and ready.

**Standardisation prior to grading**

**121** A couple of the responses pointed to procedures through which grading could be standardised prior to the formal grading of assignments:

- Students’ work is standardised by the module team before grading, and moderated by the team and by the external examiner.
  (University of Wolverhampton, FD Supporting Inclusive Practice)

- Use of a quite specific marking guide to enable some standardisation in the marking across the three sites.
  (University of Central Lancashire, FdSc Criminal Investigation)

**Double marking**

**122** Double marking was an important feature in some programmes:

- Double marked and liable to scrutiny from external examiner.
  (University of Northampton, FdA in Police and Criminal Justice Studies)

- Sessions are second marked. Tutors from UCLan sit in on assessment sessions and assess the marking of the tutors.
  (University of Central Lancashire, FdSc Criminal Investigation)

**123** Double marking was supplemented by external scrutiny in others:

- All assessment is second marked and cross moderated within the team this is followed by External Examiners sampling.
  (Worcester College of Technology, FD Fashion & Surface Pattern)

- Double marked assignments, two tutors observing, internal college moderation through university link tutor. External University moderation.
  (Stoke on Trent College, FD Addiction Studies)

- Double marking for a selection of the work. Review of overall performance statistics for assessments.
  (University of Westminster, FD Biomedical Sciences)
Internal Moderation

The Foundation degree in Health and Social Care of the University of Wolverhampton is run in four different locations. An internal moderation meeting is held with the purpose of cross-referencing standards, through a sampling of student work, between the University and its partner colleges: in case of substantial difference, the University’s view prevails. Two Foundation degrees validated by Thames Valley University and run in different consortia (the FdA Working with Children and Young People and the FdSc Computer Systems Management) are subject to cross-college moderation. The Foundation degree in Breast Imaging, run jointly by Kingston University and St George’s, University of London, holds monthly meetings at which students’ portfolios or dissertations are discussed.

Other examples of moderation include:

Specifically to address the issue of individual students presenting work rather than entire cohorts as in traditional work, internal quality process is rigorous. The reported moderation techniques are:-
- Internal moderation at the FSC (Fire Service College) by a panel of QA specialists and tutors, external moderation at the HEI awarding body by academic staff plus external examiner review at awards board.
- Practice assessment is moderated through the Practice Assessment Panel. However decisions of practice placement assessors may be questioned in relation to evidence for conclusion but very rarely in relation to the actual decision.

External examining and verification

In the following, the emphasis is on some form of external scrutiny.

External verifiers scrutinise the assessment process including video feedback.

The P/F decision for the clinical assessment is agreed between the assessor, the student’s practice educator and the workplace manager/superintendent. All final marks go to an external examiner appointed by the HEI. (Kingston University and St Georges University of London (Joint Faculty of Health & Social Care Sciences), FdSc Breast Imaging)

Two lecturers review the progress of the discussion forum throughout. The grade is agreed by two lecturers and a service user representative and then externally moderated by the programme’s external examiner ... .

(Staffordshire University, FdSc Mental Health)
Concluding comment

127 The examples noted in this document testify to an imagination as regards assessment that is probably not as appreciated as it should be. There will be other examples whose virtues are yet unsung beyond the institutions in which the programmes are running. Work-based learning faces institutions with challenges regarding assessment that are, simultaneously, opportunities for responses that are not 'boxed in' by traditional assessment methods or by perceived bureaucratic constraints. The key requirement is to find optimal ways in which students can demonstrate their learning and practical capabilities, and how these interlock within the Foundation degree curriculum. It is important to ensure (and assure) that the assessment of work-based learning is valid in terms of the general intentions of Foundation degree programmes (and not necessarily in terms of historic assessment practices).

128 As great a challenge as that of ensuring validity is to find ways of communicating students' achievements to interested parties. There are perhaps three levels of reportage detectable in the way that the recording of student achievement is developing:

1. What the institution can warrant
2. What the institution can confirm, but not warrant
3. What the student can claim (with supporting evidence), but the institution can neither confirm nor warrant.

The circumstances of a student's engagement with a Foundation degree programme will to some extent determine the relative importance of the three levels.
Some sources that might be particularly useful


QAA (various dates) Code of practice for the assurance of academic qualification and standards in higher education. Gloucester: QAA. At www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/


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Examples

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Valene Cox, City of Wolverhampton College: FD in Supporting Inclusive Practice.

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Jenny Eland, Birmingham City University: FD in Early Years.

Charlie Ellis, University of Central Lancashire: FdSc in Criminal Investigation.

Chrystalla Ferrier, University of Westminster: FD in Biomedical Sciences.

Laura Gilbert, Canterbury Christ Church University: FD in Children and Families.

36 The anonymity of the 2008 SACWG survey means that individual respondents’ contributions cannot be credited here.
Guidance for the assessment of work-based learning in Foundation degrees

Pete Green, University of Glamorgan.
Graham Harris, University of Greenwich: FdSc in Paramedic Science.
Alison Hay, Staffordshire University: FdSc in Mental Health.
Cathy Higgs, University of the West of England: FdA in Rivers and Coastal Engineering.
Ian Hooper and Lisa Ashton, University of Wolverhampton and Rodbaston Campus of South Staffordshire College: FDs in Equine Management; Amenity Horticulture.
Ian Hughes, University of Wolverhampton: FdA in Project Management.
Mohammad Jabur, Stockport College.
Jill Kay, University of Teesside: Fd in Healthcare Practice.
Mark Kilgallon, National Policing Improvement Agency.
George Kirkham, Creative Academy/Thames Valley University: Fd in Dance.
Catherine Lamond, University of Wolverhampton: Fd in Supporting Inclusive Practice.
Julie Laxton, University of Leeds: Undergraduate Diploma in Dental Hygiene and Therapy.
Bob Lyman and Steve Curtis, University of Northampton: FD in Police and Criminal Justice Studies.
Suzanne May, Harper Adams University College.
Margaret McDonough, Worcester College of Technology: FD Fashion and Surface Pattern.
Colin Meech, Fire Service College: Fd in Fire Service Management.
Carole Mulcare, Canterbury College: Fd in Management.
Alan Murphy, University of Leeds: BA (Hons) Social Work.
Phil Nichols, University of Wolverhampton: FdA in Commercial Video Production.
Hilary Orpet, Royal Veterinary College.
Jeremy Osborne, City College Norwich: Fd in Business Computing.
Stephen Powell, University of Bolton.
Sue Rennie, University of Wolverhampton: Fd in Small Business Management.
Heather Robinson, University of Central Lancashire: Fd in Health and Social Care (Assistant Practitioner).

Peter Robinson, University of Wolverhampton: Fd in Travel Operations Management.
Jane Rowley, Stoke on Trent College: Fd in Addiction Studies.
Ian Scott, University of Worcester.
Esther Shreeve, The Cambridge Theological Federation.
Sue Southgate, Anglia Ruskin University: Fd in Ophthalmic Dispensing.
Clare Taylor, Worcester College of Technology: FD Business and Associated Pathways.
Claire Thurgate, Canterbury Christ Church University.
Anne Wheeler, Aston University.
Richard Williams, University of Wolverhampton: Fd in Business Management.

SACWG colleagues
Graham Curtis, University of East London
Chris Haines, Middlesex University
Marian Redding, Anglia Ruskin University
Chris Rust, Oxford Brookes University
Marie Stowell, University of Worcester
Graham Taylor-Russell, London Metropolitan University
Wayne Turnbull, Liverpool John Moores University
Lawrie Walker, Thames Valley University
Alan Weale, University of Wolverhampton
Appendix

Some assessment methods that may be useful in Foundation degrees

This list is indicative rather than exhaustive, and some methods have been mentioned in this text. It may be useful to colleagues who are looking for alternatives to the assessment methods currently in use. Each method has advantages and disadvantages, which need to be borne in mind when devising assessments for a whole Foundation degree programme. The inherent variations reinforce the desirability of using a variety of assessment methods in order to give students an optimal chance of demonstrating their capabilities.

There are ethical issues in some of the suggestions, which would need to be addressed.

- Audio- and/or video-recording of workplace practices, with analytical commentary
- Case studies
- Computer-based assessments (not limited to multiple-choice questions)
- Contributions to group or individual blogs, wikis, online forums, bulletin boards
- Creating learning packages
- Critical analyses of experience
- Critical incident or other reflective practice exercises
- Direct observation of performance
- Experimentation in the workplace, in the sense of trying out an innovation and assessing the outcomes
- Learning logs or diaries
- Multiple choice questions
- Orals and interviews
- Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) which, though used in health education, could be modified for other contexts
- ‘Patchwork text’
- Portfolios
- Poster sessions
- Presentations
- Problem-solving
- Projects, individual and group
- Questionnaires and surveys devised by learners
- Reports (which may, other than in writing, be presented in audio or video format)
- Self-and peer-assessed exercises
- Systematic observation of workplace practices

fdf
Lichfield Centre
The Friary
Lichfield
Staffordshire
WS13 6QG
01543 30 11 50
www.fdf.ac.uk