

**Essential Skills Communication
Summer 2005**

Principal Moderator's Report

Level 1 and Level 2

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The work submitted for moderation consisted of both portfolio and desktop task, though in a number of instances only the portfolio was submitted. Centres must try to time the successful completion of both elements to ensure that their learners/students can be awarded a level. The standard of the work submitted varied considerably, though for the most part assessors were accurate in their judgements particularly in assessing the desktop task.

Action based activities

It was pleasing to note the variety of evidence produced using the themed template approach to portfolio development. In many instances it was clear that this structured approach enabled learners/students to pursue an area of interest. As a consequence, they were able to work with a clear purpose and produce meaningful evidence.

Assessors who did not show explicit evidence of assessment through annotation were given the opportunity to do so and resubmit. Centres should note that annotation is a requirement within the Action Based Activity approach- see Tutor Guide Pg11. The purpose of annotation is to indicate where assessor judgements have been made in relation to the standard. Where there has been little or no assessor annotation it is difficult to see how the internal standardising process could be adequately quality assured.

The 'best fit' approach to assessment proved very effective and, for the most part, assessors were able to exercise their judgement accurately. One misunderstanding occurred. 'Best fit' applies to the assessment of each component within a level of entry. Assessors cannot, for instance, award a level 2 for Writing and a level 1 for Read and Summarise and then go on to award a level 2 for the portfolio on the grounds of a 'best fit' approach.

The requirement at level 1 is to Read and Obtain information from at least one document. Though the tutor/teacher can set questions relating to the source document to help direct their learners/students reading, it is inappropriate to give the learners/students the key points from the text or allow a whole class to take down the same points even though they may have been generated through class discussion. The evidence submitted must be the learners/students, individual work.

Tutors/teachers should also take care in advising learners/students on the selection of reading material. The source material should not contain language and vocabulary too far in advance of the learners/students own reading level. In some instances, sources containing very dense text and complicated language were used at level 1.

There are still some centres experiencing difficulty in interpreting the standard for Read and Summarise at Level 2. A meaningful task should be set that would allow the learner/student to produce a written response that summarises what has been read. The evidence for summary could be produced when the learner/student attempts to answer the key question that was generated from the completion of the mind-map. Setting a summary as a task is inappropriate. See examples given on Pg 36 QCA Standards and Guidance for Key Skills 2004.

Centres are advised to construct portfolio cover sheets that clearly locate the evidence, possibly through the use of page numbers. In a number of instances it was difficult to distinguish between source documents and evidence produced.

Desktop Tasks

The purpose of the Desktop Task is to confirm the portfolio level. It is clear that timing is an issue. Tutors/teachers need to be aware that they should be preparing learners/students for the Desktop Task in addition to portfolio development. Admittedly, timing is difficult at present since there are only two 'live' tasks available at each level, but there are also two 'practise' tasks at each level that could be used as diagnostic and/or formative assessment instruments. Centres need to consider their approach to this, either to teach and practise each discrete skill as it is being developed in the portfolio and/or complete the portfolio in sufficient time to allow preparation for the Desktop task. Planning is crucial in this respect.

The Desktop Tasks submitted were of a good quality and did indicate that preparation for each discrete skill had occurred. The Desktop Task proved to be a meaningful assessment instrument as it gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their application of each skill component at their level of entry. In a few cases, the outcome of the Desktop Task proved to be less than the portfolio entry. In these instances one can only assume the learner/student had no further opportunity to prepare for and attempt another task.