

Grading the Access Diploma:

Paper 1: Using tasks within assignments for grading

A unit can be assessed via one or more assignments. Where a single assignment is used, all of the grade descriptors for that unit must be used in the single assignment. Where more than one assignment is used, each unit grade descriptor must be used at least once across the assignments¹.

The problem of having too many assignment briefs

If the chosen assessment strategy for a given unit utilises a range of assignments, this will require each assignment to have its own 'assignment brief'². If there are a considerable number of assignments, this could become a heavy burden for tutors who have to design a separate brief for each one. In some cases it may be that a unit is being over assessed and tutors may decide to reduce the number of assignments accordingly.

Using assessment tasks as parts of an 'assignment

To address the issue of having too many assignment briefs, the assignment strategy for some units could use fewer formal assignments but with each one of these being broken down into a number of smaller assessment 'tasks'. For example a study skills unit worth 6 credits at Level 3, might draw upon evidence from a wide range of tasks submitted by a student over the duration of the course. Rather than make each item into a separate assignment with grade descriptors attached (e.g. note-taking, referencing, re-drafting etc), they can become sub-tasks of a larger assignment on 'academic writing skills'³. The larger 'assignment' then has grade descriptors allocated to it.

The assignment brief is then for the 'Academic writing skills' assignment. This brief will include the grade descriptors and the components used as well as the broader contextual assignment guidance (e.g. about selecting a good example of the student's notes, use of referencing in an essay etc).

Assessment

Once all of the tasks for an assignment have been submitted by the student (be sure to have a clear final end date for this), the assessment of the assignment can take place. Tutors could indicate to students whether individual tasks are adequate for pass/fail as they are submitted. However care should be taken not to stray into comments about potential grade indicators for tasks. Once all of the tasks for the assignment have been submitted, an overall judgement can be made about the grade indicators to award for the assignment. In making the decision on grade indicators, tutors will look at the grade descriptors used for the assignment brief and apply them *across the range of tasks* which make up the assignment. Only once all of the assignments have been marked and have generated a profile of grade indicators, can the final grade for the unit be determined.

¹ Grade descriptor 7 'Quality' must be used for every assignment

² OCNSER defines an assignment brief as being a document which provides the student with certain key information relating to the assignment including, amongst others, its; title, submission deadline, description and grade descriptors (with selected components).

³ Note this is the assignment title which is not necessarily the same as the actual title of the unit.

Diagram: Using tasks within assignments for grading

