

## Literature review

This assessment combines both vocational skills and industry qualifications into one assignment offering students the opportunity to gain both higher education credit points and industry recognised qualifications at the same time. It focuses on the practical elements of assessing industry recognised essential vocational skills. This literature review aims to identify the current best practice surrounding the design and assessment of vocational skills and to identify and considered some of the aspects which must be explored when considering curriculum and assessment design.

Dearing (1997) reported on the need to widen access to higher education to non traditional learner's and students with disabilities, observing that the future of higher education would encourage and enable all students to achieve beyond their expectations increasing the need and demand for higher education. The Leitch report (2006) identified a skills gap within UK industry stating that *'the UK must become a world leader in skills'* (p2). Vocational skills are increasingly becoming part of courses and programmes offered by higher education institutes and Bill Rammell, the Minister for Life Longer Learning and Higher Education stated that the growth rate for the hospitality industry *'is outstripping the overall growth rate of the UK economy'* (2005) however *'36% of employers say many applications lack the technical and practical skills the industry needs'* (2005). In the case of the hospitality industry this has been further highlighted by Maguire (2005) of the Higher Education Academy Network for Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism who identified a need to *'readdress the balance between vocational and academic pathways by providing a qualification which is both vocational focused and underpinned by appropriate academic knowledge'* (2005). *'Students now adays are expected to demonstrate skills and abilities to show that they have mastered not only subject content but also the ability to out their learning into practice in real-life contexts'* (Pickford and Brown 2006 p17) and local employers consulted during the design of the foundation degree curriculum observed that kitchen skills and product knowledge were skills that were lacking in current graduates.

The QAA highlights the need for vocational and professional qualifications to be written into foundation degrees in numerous papers and recognise this as good practice in curriculum development. (QAAHE 2003 and 2004). The foundation degree benchmarking statement argues that *'in cases where a learner could gain additional professional accreditation and / or qualifications in the course of studying for a foundation degree institutions should include the requirements of professional and vocational bodies as part of the validation process'* (QAAHE 2004 p6).

When designing assessment for this module a number of aspects were considered. Within the hospitality industry the statement by *Race et al* that '*practical work is really important in some disciplines, just as important as theoretical competence*' (2004 p68) is particularly relevant as employability is often regarded by employers within a vocational as opposed to academic context. The assessment method aims to provide students with evidence of their practical skills to show potential employers and so includes a portfolio which enables students, employers and assessors to reflect on the development of the student's attitudes, skills values and knowledge and practical kitchen skills which are crucial for employment. In addition, the use of check lists and observation of practical skills can be '*less intimidating to the candidates, providing a motivational mechanism to encourage candidate in their qualification*' (Cook 1994 p56)

The educational relevance of the assessment methods was considered and the lecturing team involved explored if the '*particular assessment method seemed to go with the context and types of a teaching and learning experience*' (Rowntree 1987 p162) that the curriculum was aiming for. After exploring several different assessment options they felt that a practical assessment method for this module would ensure equitable assessment achieving *Race et al's* requirements that the programme offered a '*balanced diet of different means of assessment within a course setting out to ensure that no particular group is favoured over any other*' (*Race et al 2004 p3*). They also considered the high number of non traditional learners and vocational entrance paths traditionally recruited onto foundation degrees wanting to ensure that they had '*established equitable circumstances under which students with dyslexia can demonstrate their accomplishments*' (*Singleton 1999 p137*), although this statement originally written for dyslexic students can equally apply to the other non learners which the course attracts including international students and adult returners to education.

In summary, if the assessment has not been designed with the students, vocational setting and learning environment in mind then '*it is not he person that has failed but rather the measurement instrument*' (Gardner 1999 p99)

## Bibliography

- Cook, C(1994) Assessor Workbook: Guidance and Practice in Vocational Assessment Macmillian
- Dearing (1997) The Dearing Report- National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education available online from [http://www.hero.ac.uk/uk/inside\\_he/government\\_and\\_higher\\_education/major\\_education\\_reports4024.cfm](http://www.hero.ac.uk/uk/inside_he/government_and_higher_education/major_education_reports4024.cfm)
- Gardner, H (1999) Assessment in Context in Learner's' Learning and Assessment Edited by P Murphy The Open University Press
- Leitch, S (2006) Prosperity for all in the Global Economy-World Class Skills Final Report DfES
- Maguire, A (2005) Foundation Degrees – Meeting The Skills Gap? Link 13 The Hospitality Leisure, Sport and Tourism Network Higher Education Academy
- Pickford, R and Brown, S (2006) Assessing Skills and Practice Routledge
- QAAHE (2000) Subject Benchmark Statement Unit 25 Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism QAAHE
- QAAHE (2003) Report of a survey to follow up Foundation Degree review carried out in 2002-03 QAAHE
- QAAHE (2004) Foundation Degree qualification benchmark QAAHE
- Race, P. Brown, S and Smith, B (2004) 500 Tips on Assessment RoutledgeFalmer
- Rammell, B (2005) Keynote Speech Foundation Degree Forward 2006 National Conference available from <http://fdfconf.oceanworksdevelopment.net/index.html>
- Rowntree, D (1987) Assessing Students: How Shall we Know Them? Kogan Page
- Singleton, C (1999) Report on Dyslexia in Higher Education: policy, provision and practice by National Working Part on Dyslexia in Higher Education The University of Hull