



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

Judgement in the assessment of 'harder to examine' skills: What do assessors pay attention to?

Victoria Crisp

Paper presented at the
15th Annual Conference of the Association for Educational Assessment in Europe (AEA-Europe)
Tallinn, 6-8 November 2014.

Author contact details:

ARD Research Division
Cambridge Assessment
1 Regent Street
Cambridge
CB2 1GG

crisp.v@cambridgeassessment.org.uk

<http://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/>

Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, a department of the University of Cambridge. Cambridge Assessment is a not-for-profit organisation.

Abstract

In the 21st Century, skills such as creativity, communication, teamwork and problem solving are highly valued. However, assessing such skills validly and reliably can be challenging as assessment types other than written exams are likely to be needed. One method for assessing such skills would be school-based assessments such as coursework or portfolios based on project work. School-based assessment has been in use for many years in the UK to assist in assessing skills that are less suited to testing with written examinations. Whilst not a 21st Century innovation, forms of school-based assessment have the potential to assist us in a changing educational world.

For practical reasons, assessment of coursework or projects is often conducted by the students' own teachers. In order for such assessments to be a robust form of assessment, teachers need to apply criteria appropriately and consistently, and quality control procedures are needed. The human judgement involved when appropriate experts decide the scores or grades that are deserved are central to the assessment process yet the actual thought processes involved during marking, particularly by teachers, are under-researched. For school-based assessment by teachers to be a good option for assessing 21st Century skills such as teamwork and problem solving, we need to be confident in the judgements being made and that the features affecting the judgements are the right ones.

This paper will use data from a study of the judgements involved in marking project work, in which thirteen teachers were asked to think aloud whilst marking examples of student work and nine examiners were asked to think aloud whilst moderating the marks given by teachers. These data will be used to investigate whether the features that assessors pay attention to map onto the criteria set out in the marking guidance, and whether appropriate features of student work are being attended to when assessors evaluate aspects of the work as positive or negative.

The paper will discuss implications for using school-based assessments to assess 21st century skills and whether any variations in the features attended to could explain variations in marks from different assessors.