

Do assessors pay attention to appropriate features of student work when making assessment judgements?

Victoria Crisp, Cambridge Assessment

A paper presented at the International Association for Educational Assessment Annual Conference, Baku, Azerbaijan, September 2007.

Abstract

It is via the judgements of appropriate experts that assessment decisions are made yet the actual thought processes involved during marking or grading are under-researched. This paper will draw on a study of the cognitive and socially-influenced processes involved in marking and grading A level geography examinations and pilot research into the marking of GCSE coursework by teachers. These data will be used to investigate whether assessors pay attention to appropriate features of student work.

Verbal protocols of assessors' thinking aloud whilst marking and grading work were collected and measures of marker agreement were obtained. The protocols were analysed in detail using appropriate coding schemes. From the behaviours identified, a tentative model of the marking process was developed, within which features of student work affecting judgements and social and personal reactions were identified. Whilst many features that appeared to influence evaluations were clearly focussed on the criteria intended for evaluation, some were not and could have influenced evaluations. Reactions to language use or legibility (when not assessing communication), personal or emotional responses and social responses sometimes occurred before marking decisions. The paper will discuss whether such responses could explain variations in marks from different examiners.

This paper draws on research data reported elsewhere and work still in progress and expands on some of the analyses previously conducted. The papers listed below report on different aspects of the data analysis linked to research involving A level geography examination marking.

Crisp, V. (2007) Comparing the decision-making processes involved in marking between examiners and between different types of examination questions, *paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, London.*

Crisp, V. (in press) Exploring the nature of examiner thinking during the process of examination marking, *Cambridge Journal of Education.*

Crisp, V. (to be submitted) A tentative model of the judgement processes involved in examination marking.