



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

A new model of assessment for 14 to 19 year olds: What do students and their teachers think of Diploma assessments?

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Abstract

The new 14 – 19 Diplomas are a substantial part of current 14 – 19 educational reforms in England. The first five of these began teaching in September 2008 with a further five in September 2009. They are designed to prepare young people for the world of work or for independent study. They are also intended to contribute to ensuring that a wide range of appropriate learning pathways are available to young people, thus facilitating increased participation and attainment. The Diploma is a composite qualification made up of the following elements: principal learning; generic learning; additional and specialist learning. This presentation will report on the introduction of ‘controlled assessments’ within the principal learning element.

This new model of assessment is carried out through internal assessment for which a number of controls are applied to the tasks undertaken at given levels. The controls include time allowed, supervision and collaboration. The presentation will outline findings relating to the effects of controlled assessments within the diploma principal learning, the manageability of the assessments and some broader issues in relation to teaching and learning.

Teachers and students were interviewed at six consortia (groups of schools and colleges working together to deliver the diplomas). The feedback indicated that the nature of the assessments encouraged learning and facilitated a less didactic environment. The assessments were generally felt to be less pressurised than traditional assessments and most learners found the tasks enjoyable and motivating. The assessment types were reportedly encouraging the learning of broader skills (e.g. teamwork, communication, independence) which are considered valuable. These skills are felt to make students more confident, competent and what one teacher described as ‘whole people’. However there was some evidence that not all teachers had yet understood the requirements around the assessment ‘controls’ and questions remained about the assessment standards and evidence required.