



CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT

The teacher as examiner: How do teachers make judgements when marking coursework?

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Abstract

The process by which assessors evaluate student work using a set of marking criteria is somewhat hidden and potentially complex. Research into these judgement processes is growing but there has been limited work in contexts where teachers conduct the assessment or in contexts involving extended work. It is important to understand the processes underpinning assessment judgements in order to evaluate the dependability of assessment by teachers and to provide a sound basis for decisions regarding assessment training.

This research explored the judgement processes involved when teachers mark GCSE coursework. The themes explored included:

- how features of the work and/or criteria are used;
- the role of comparison;
- internalised notions of the quality of work required for different grades;
- the importance of various types of experiences to marking practice.

Thirteen teachers across three subjects (English, Geography and ICT) were interviewed about aspects of their marking judgements and 378 teachers across a wider range of subjects completed an associated questionnaire.

Findings of interest include: teachers actively seek particular evidence types but sometimes also attend to other features; comparing the work of different students is more common in judgements for some subjects than others; many teachers feel they have internalised notions of the work expected for particular grades and more experienced teachers were more likely to report this; exam board guidance and discussing student work with other teachers were particularly valued as experiences supporting judgements. Findings are likely to generalise to 'controlled assessments' which have replaced coursework in the GCSE.



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