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A subject community approach to Assessment

Dr Jon Hobson,
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Presentation on behalf of the Academic Development Unit at the University of Gloucestershire, 2016

What were we trying to address?

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- **Mixed practice in teaching and assessment causing dissatisfaction**
  - ***Lack of clarity in modules – purpose?***
  - ***Inconsistent feedback - quality/quantity***
  - ***Disjoint between Course & Module LOs***

Assessment and feedback as the most essential interface

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What did we do

1. **Establish the practice of using the Learning Outcome approach in modules**

2. **Clarify Course LOs (benchmarked and suitable)**

3. **Ensure consistency between Course and module LOs**

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1. Establish the practice

- **Establish Module LOs as the purpose of a module (and hence the degree)**
- **Standardise feedback approach to reflect centrality of LOs**
- **Changing expectations for staff and students – creating consistency**

Key outcomes:

- New assessment feedback template as common practice across Subject Community
- Focus on LOs and Feed Forward >>

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2. Clarify Course LOs

- **Aided by QAA requirements to revisit course LOs for exit awards**

- **Opportunity to align clearly with Benchmarking and other level-specific criteria**

Key outcome:

- Clear language in course LOs, with well articulated progression between levels

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3. Ensure consistency

- **Revisit all module LOs to ensure language is clear**
- **Manage ongoing practice within the team – gives space to develop new and innovative feedback techniques**

Key outcomes:

- ASP as a management tool for ACL/ASL
- Healthy, appropriate, consistent degrees
- Happy students

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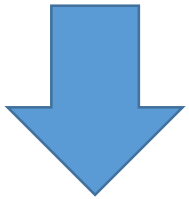
What does this look like?

Course Learning Outcomes



Module Learning Outcomes

Assessment Feedback

See handout (next slide)

Course Learning Outcomes: BA Sociology

In order to achieve a CertHE, a student should be able to:

1. understand the nature of different social relationships and the processes that underpin social change (6.5);
2. describe a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches within sociology (6.5);
3. identify diverse research strategies and methods, and illustrate their use in gaining sociological knowledge (6.6).

In order to achieve a DipHE, a student should be able to:

4. examine the processes that underpin social change and social stability (6.5);
5. evaluate the relationship between sociological theory, arguments and evidence in a range of contexts (6.5);
6. Apply a range of research strategies and methods and assess the appropriateness of their use (6.6).

In order to achieve a BA, a student should be able to:

7. provide an analytical account of the nature of social relationships between individuals, groups and social institutions (6.5);
8. critically examine a range of key concepts and theoretical approaches within sociology and evaluate their application (6.5);
9. Present the philosophical, and methodological background of one's own research and the research of others (6.6).

Figures in brackets refer to relevant sections of the Sociology Benchmarking statement, 2016 http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Sociology-16.pdf)

Example of Module Learning outcomes (L5 Sociology module)

Module Title	Challenging Injustice: Welfare, Policy and Control
Module Code	NS5405
Learning Outcomes	A student passing this module should be able to: 1. Apply key concepts in the study of social policy, welfare and injustice 2. Examine debates relating to inequality and power in the development and practice of social policies 3. Apply theories of power and inequality to analyse social needs and problems 4. Evaluate research on social policy with reference to power and inequality
Assessment (For further details see the Module Guide)	001: 40% Coursework: Individual, standard written: 1000 words or equivalent 002: 60% Coursework: Individual, standard written: 2000 words or equivalent

Example of Feedback Template

Dear XXXX,

You have now completed NS5405 assignment 1, worth 40% of your overall grade for the module. The following feedback is based on the learning outcomes (LOs), detailed in the Module Guide. There are also general comments, with some specific 'feed-forward' to help you on future assignments.

Learning Outcome 1: Apply key concepts in the study of social policy, welfare and injustice

Staff guidance:
Comments under the LO headings can be either brief references to student achievement under each, leaving more time for the marker to give comments in the final 'general section, or can be more in depth with the 'general' section left to cover overarching issues and 'feed-forward'.

Learning Outcome 2: Examine debates relating to inequality and power in the development and practice of social policies

Comments…

Learning Outcome 4: Evaluate research on social policy with reference to power and inequality

Comments….

Overall comments and Feed forward >>
As well as the comments above, here are a few things to consider that will hopefully help you with future work. If you want to discuss these, then please feel free to get in touch with me or with your personal tutor.
Comments here should cover any issues of general nature that aren't already covered in the above summaries under each LO, such as:

- *referencing*
- *assignment structure e.g. essay/research report/poster*
- *grammar/writing style*
- *progression/development of skills*
- *what the student did particularly well/poorly*

It must also contain 'feed-forward' suggestions on how students can improve their mark in future assignments

Marked by: Markers Name

Does it work?

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NSS 2016	BSc Criminology	
	2015	2016
	Agree	Agree
Assessment and feedback	**63.0%**	**93.8%**
5. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	90.3%	100.0%
6. Assessment arrangements and marking have been fair.	67.7%	93.1%
7. Feedback on my work has been prompt.	40.0%	89.7%
8. I have received detailed comments on my work.	64.5%	93.1%
9. Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things	51.6%	93.1%

ACE Survey Results

BA Sociology

	2016/17	University: 2016/17
Overall Satisfaction: Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course	**100.0%**	**83.4%**
⊞ **The Teaching on my Course**	**84.4%**	**83.0%**
⊞ **Learning Opportunities**	**95.8%**	**82.7%**
⊟ **Assessment and Feedback**	**84.4%**	**75.5%**
The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	87.5%	74.5%
Marking and assessment has been fair	100.0%	73.5%
Feedback on my work has been timely	87.5%	77.1%
I have received helpful comments on my work	62.5%	76.9%
Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand	*NaN*	*NaN*
⊞ **Academic Support**	**95.8%**	**79.8%**
⊞ **Organisation and Management**	**91.7%**	**74.2%**
⊞ **Learning Resources**	**87.5%**	**83.0%**
⊞ **Learning Community**	**81.3%**	**79.0%**
⊞ **Student Voice**	**81.3%**	**65.8%**

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Next steps

- **Revisit and revise 'Level Descriptors' with more specific 'Assessment Descriptors'**

- **Replace 'generic' Skills-based LOs which are explicit in the Assessment Descriptors**

Key Outcome:

- 2017/18: Level Descriptors Rolling out across SocSci and EnvSci (and trialled in PsySci)