

Sue Bernadé



At 2pm I go into another meeting, this time about a new course we are developing. I discuss with the team devising and delivering the course whether it agrees with the assessment expectations of the College policy and whether we have the resources to deliver it. Today's meeting is a follow-up review of our position and what has been decided so far. Once we have drawn up the paperwork showing that we are in a position to deliver it and I am satisfied about the quality of the assessment, I will then sign it off and forward it to the financial manager for further consideration. This process is known as 'Internal Qualification Approval'. We have to look at whether we have the staff and resources to deliver the course, as well as qualified assessors, and that there is a market demand for this kind of course before we can implement it.

New qualifications

At 2.30pm I meet with a colleague to discuss a Diploma project we want to offer in Society, Health and Development. He has asked for assistance in drawing up the assessment brief, so I have invited a representative from our awarding body to support us in the development of the assignment brief, to make sure we have understood the requirements. When we have drawn up a model I post it on the college intranet so that other tutors and lecturers can see the standardised specifications.

Diplomas are a new qualification and we have to make absolutely sure we have got this right. We have to ensure we are teaching in line with the assessment guidelines, and the expected learning activities, that staff understand all the documentation from the awarding bodies and the context in which the assessment is set. These qualifications are also new to the awarding bodies so we are all trying to do our best to get to grips with them.

At 3.30pm I have a meeting on our other site with a member of the Enterprise Development Team who organises Train to Gain courses. This is a government initiative that allows businesses to deliver assessment in the workplace. We help them ensure they have the knowledge needed and draw up a questionnaire that will analyse whether assessors have the appropriate support in terms of continuing professional development. We must be careful that learners are correctly advised which course to take, and that the people who carry out assessment are fully equipped to do so. The integrity of the college and its ability to deliver are paramount.

By 4pm my working day is usually over, although I do have to work flexibly. Occasionally an external assessor visits college in the evening when the course is being run, so I have to be here then.

external examining report, which said that not enough evidence was provided for the examiner to make a judgement easily about student attainment without reading all the way through the report. So we are working on amending the current assignment brief to ensure the assessors' judgement is on the front page and easy to find. I have to help staff see the bigger picture of assessment processes and also to know what lies ahead for their learners.

sure that the assessment is valid, reliable and current and being carried out correctly by the teacher.

I attend these meetings to ensure that everything the EV needs is communicated to the members of staff in the department. In turn, staff must ensure that the information requested is available for the EV. Usually the EV will have asked for samples from named students, so the teacher will have checked the person is still on the course, and if not, that the EV has been informed. Some EVs will ask for a certain number of units of work. These meetings can last as little as 10 minutes if there are no major problems, but the idea is that I can pick up any issues early.

It could be that that the EV's visit has been organised as a result of sanctions being applied on a previous visit and if the issues have not been resolved it could affect our ability to certificate students, so this is an important part of my work. A key role for me is to minimise the risk of things going wrong.

Reporting duty

At 1pm, after lunch, I spend some time going through the external verification reports, updating the database and compiling sector reports. This involves pulling together written reports for each faculty on each of the qualifications they deliver, based on the findings of external examiners and verifiers. Each qualification is subject to assessor visits from the awarding bodies at least once a year. The resulting reports will outline good practice that has been noted, any previous actions that need to be carried out and what aspects still require to be worked on.

I compile a report for each faculty, but also for each line of learning, as related courses may be carried out by different faculties. This is quite a job, but I try to spend 30 minutes a day on this. I will discuss the findings with faculties and each sector in due course to assess where further work is needed as part of the risk management process we undertake in college for each of our courses.

At about 1.30pm, I see an EV who is visiting staff on one of our Information Technologies Qualifications and who will be getting feedback from the staff member delivering the course. The EV will have pre-arranged what they need to see and will want to look at course delivery. They will be looking at the quality of assessment, making

Setting the standard

Interview **Dorothy Lepkowska** Photographs **Jim Varney**

Sue Bernadé champions rigorous assessment across City College Plymouth

My name is Sue Bernadé and I am the chief internal verifier at the City College Plymouth, in Devon, where it is my job to manage the quality of assessment and verification across all faculties in the college.

My working day starts at about 8.45am, when I deal with e-mails and queries from teaching colleagues seeking advice and guidance on aspects of assessments or verification. Today I've been responding to one of the awarding bodies which wanted to see some documents for external standardisation so I have been amassing that information from the relevant members

of staff. I also responded to a colleague who suggested we organise a workshop on how to write OCR IT nationals assessment briefs.

At about 9.15am I go to a Franchise Partner meeting with colleagues and NHS representatives, with whom we are working in partnership to deliver vocational courses for healthcare assistants. We are discussing and feeding back on external verification reports. This is part of our quality control procedure and forms part of the contract we have with them as providers. We have to make sure that the rigour of assessment is maintained and that we are meeting our contractual obligations to them and the Learning and Skills Council.

We are working towards a natural progression from level 1, 2 and 3 healthcare

assistants in these vocational courses, and then in turn, from the healthcare course to a degree in nursing.

This meeting lasts just under an hour, and at about 11am I make time to catch up on reports and make myself available to staff who need to speak to me about problems, for example, tracking student progress, or acting upon recommendations made by external verifiers (EVs). One of the lecturers has been to see me about writing a new assessment plan for an NVQ because the model he had was not working for him and his colleagues. His assessment procedures were not properly sequenced, which meant that the assessment process was not documented in the right order, even though all the good practice was there. This had caused some confusion among staff, so we worked on coming up with an alternative.

At 11.30am, I go to talk to a lecturer who is following up on the feedback of an HE

CV

Name: Sue Bernadé
Lives: Plymouth, Devon
Job: Chief Internal Verifier for City College Plymouth, managing the quality of assessment and verification throughout the institution.
Reason for becoming teacher/ assessor: I believe in the importance of modelling education to the needs of the person to help them reach their potential