

Summary of findings from a sample of EA reports 2023

Sampling of reports

Fifty-five EA reports were sampled across all 5 service spheres as follows: 3 from Adult Ed, 36 from colleges of FET (3 per college), 1 from each of the TCs plus 3 from second providers, 3 from the education service to prisons and seven from YouthReach. Reports were sampled to maximize the spread of programmes and the spread of external authenticators. The reports were inputted into a spreadsheet and themes extracted as they emerged.

The quality of the reports themselves was analysed and is also commented upon in this summary report

Quality of EA reports

The quality of the reports varied on a spectrum from detailed, constructive and highly-organised on the one end to very sparse indeed on the other. The sparsest reports went little beyond authenticating the results and giving a few vague, evaluative comments. Most, however, gave good, detailed analysis and recommendations.

Summary of themes from EA reports

In what follows, most good practice and areas for enhancement apply across service spheres and across and within centres.

Briefs/Assignments

Areas of good practice

- Good examples of integration in briefs
- Assignments give good opportunity to the students to develop a variety of skills.
- Clear and detailed structure and instruction on briefs
- Gave learners the opportunity to be creative while meeting LOs
- Gave learners the opportunity to gain full marks

Areas for enhancement

- Unclear and made marking difficult to EA
- Too many, too old, not adequate to the level
- Weighting incorrect
- Unclear, too vague, onerous and complicated
- City of Dublin ETB template not used
- Did not give learners the opportunity to gain full marks

Academic Integrity

Good practice

- Good to see recommendation to use FET referencing guide for referencing research – this should be embedded into all assignment briefs – add to assignment brief template.
- Sample of bibliography technique included – could be linked to FESS handbook.
- No marks were allocated for work that was not referenced.
- Ethics attended to in assignments

Areas for enhancement

- Little evidence of Harvard referencing being applied
- Suggest that examples of Harvard referencing be included in assignment briefs
- Ethics approval process for primary social science research
- Use opportunities to embed academic referencing (in-text and bibliography) across the assignments
- Suggestion to allocate specific marks for academic referencing.

Digital Platforms

- Google sheets, One Drive, Padlet, Moodle

Good practice

- The Moodle platform was easy to access with a note to the EA from each teacher to notify the EA of where all work was located.
- One Drive easy to navigate

Issues and areas for enhancement

- Use of QR code to access materials; EA querying GDPR and licensing permissions
- Some names of tabs in Moodle were slightly different to module names
- A standardised template for submission of all components to ensure that all work is labelled clearly to include name, module, award and date

Evidence & Access to evidence

Good practice

- Excellent labelling and layout of work both in tutors' folders and student work and evidence. Easy to navigate
- Suitable workbooks completed in full by students
- All evidence easily found and of a good/excellent standard

Areas for enhancement

- Learners' work not labelled. Perhaps a template for each submission would help.
- Some evidence not available

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Good practice

- Evidence of people being given a variety of formats to use in assessment
- Excellent use of UDL in assessments evident, which enhances learning outcomes and demonstrates a progressive approach to learning
- Great to see recordings- video or audio to capture evidence from diverse learners.

Areas for enhancement

- Some evidence of students completing practical aspects of learning outcomes would be welcome: Photo or video
- Video logs could be piloted

Feedback

Good practice

- Focused, targeted, explicit, helpful, clear and constructive, encouraging, personalized and professional
- Formative and summative feedback. Summative feedback very clear and linked to grade allocation

Areas for enhancement

- Descriptive rather than constructive
- Not evident or unclear
- Summative feedback given but more formative feedback needed
- More documentation of feedback given to students needed

Marking/Grading

Good practice

- Fair, and consistent with module descriptor and national standards
- No marginal marks close to grade cut off points
- Detailed marking schemes show transparency of grades awarded

Areas for enhancement

- Incomplete marking schemes
- Inconsistencies with grades
- Grades left close to cut-off points
- Totting errors
- Not transparent where marks are lost/gained
- Rubrics could be a standard document used as part of the suite of assessment tools in any of the graded modules

Integration

Good practice

- Excellent, highly visible, well-signposted cross-modular integration
- Good use of cross-modulated hours

Areas for enhancement

- Scope for further cross-modular assessments and brief integration to reduce workload for learners and assessors
- Well-organised
- Integration statement, which supports applied learning across modules.

Internal Verification (IV) process

- Good practice
- Great attention to detail
- Minor discrepancies noted and amended prior to EA visit
- Multi-layered IV process
- Evidence of robust IV

Areas for enhancement

- Totting errors not picked up
- Evidence missing, marking sheets not attached, signatures missing
- Need to circle back on issues detected in IV
- No issues identified in IV report