Code of Practice Governance Group – 14 April 2020

Assessment Arrangements 2020 – position paper

Background

The purpose of assessment arrangements is to give candidates who are identified as having a physical, behavioural, mental health or learning difficulties an equal opportunity to demonstrate their attainment in an assessment, without compromising the integrity of the assessment.

For externally assessed examination, the Assessment Arrangement Request (AAR) service is the system used by centres to log all proposed adjustments. There is a wide variety of assessment arrangements required (eg adapted question papers, extra time, use of IT, practical assistance, scribes).

For internal assessment and externally assessed coursework centres do not need to contact us to put assessment arrangements in place. In most cases, the assessment arrangement that centres put in place will be the same as those requested through AAR, as all requests should reflect candidates' usual ways of working. However, it should be noted that there is anecdotal evidence that for a minority of candidates, notably in the college sector, the requirement for an assessment arrangement is determined later in the academic session and so some earlier work carried out by the candidate will have been undertaken with no assessment arrangement in place and that could include the prelim exam.

In 2019, we received 64,200 assessment arrangement requests. The service re-opened for the 2020 examination diet in October 2019 and to date has received 40,400 requests. Since the announcement on 19 March that the exam diet is not taken place, only a further 1,342 requests on AAR have been received, during a period where typically we would expect 1000+ a day. The AA team have received 15 queries from centres about whether they should still submit requests on AAR.

The published deadline date for centres to submit requests on the AAR system is 17 April 2020.

Considerations

1. The assessment arrangement service is for timetable examinations only. It allows us to capture individual candidates' requirements from centres for the exams and ensure that these are supported.
2. It exists to enable candidates to demonstrate their attainment in specific assessments, not to compensate where attainment isn't demonstrated.
3. The low volume of AAR submissions since 19 March indicates that most centres have inferred that there is no need to submit further requests.
4. AAR data stays on the system until September when it would normally be wiped by business systems and the system reopens for the next academic session in October. A full data-cut is taken by the AA team and retained for two years.
5. Historically, there has been significant variation between centres concerning the usage of this service. The research done on this indicates that some centres have been putting in place arrangements without reference to SQA. This is something that we have been looking to address through the liaison team's work with centres, training and the assessment arrangement audits process.
6. The system remains open after the deadline date (17 April) to support centres who identify a need for assessment arrangements late and cases where there are 'temporary disabilities'

7. The AA team have not been able to identify any unintended consequences of the assessment arrangement process not running as usual, other than incompleteness of the data which is used to support planning for future sessions.

Proposed actions:

As the AAR deadline is 17 April, it is sensible to take no action until 20 April.

Communications on 20 April can include clarification that:

- There is no requirement for centres to submit further AA requests.
- As centres make their estimates, the assume should be that appropriate assessment arrangements would have been in place for all candidates requiring them.

Decisions required:

1. The data on the system will be retained on the system until September 2020 and a data-cut retained for two years. Given exams are not to take place, should this be retained?
    a. If the data is useful to support other activities (eg EEM equalities impact assessment, post-certification services) it needs to be factored in that it is not a complete data set and was collected for a different practical and specific purpose.

Recommendation

It is recommended that communication published on 20 April contain the message as detailed in the proposed action.

It is recommended that the data is not retained as it is incomplete and so cannot be used for comparative purposes. Also it will have limited use as quantitative evidence to support other activities.