

# Graduate Skills Assessment (GSA)



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# An exciting undertaking

- groundbreaking
- challenging
  - conceptualisation
  - operationalisation
- report results against a standards framework
- (potentially politically charged)

## 1999: Initial DETYA brief

- ACER to consult with universities and other interested parties to identify a set of valued generic skills which could be effectively assessed at university entry and exit level
  - extensive process of consultation with universities and other stakeholders

# Components

- Written Communication
- Critical Thinking
- Problem Solving
- Interpersonal Understandings
  - popular; mentioned by employers and universities
  - transferable; underpinning other skills
  - readily measurable

# 1. Written communication

- Report task
  - to comprehend, select, organise, paraphrase and clearly present factual information
- Argument task
  - to develop a point of view about an issue and to structure and clearly present an argument in support of that view

# Criteria for assessment

- Language and Expression (control of language conventions, clarity and effectiveness of expression)
- Organisation (effectiveness and purposefulness of organisation)
- Thought (depth of analysis of issues or information)

## 2. Critical thinking (mc)

- Reasoning in everyday contexts  
(passages that present real world viewpoints)

- *Comprehending* -- identifying explicit and implicit meaning
- *Analysing* -- identifying definitions being applied, claims being made, points of view, key issues, lines of reasoning, evidence, conclusions, arguments, assumptions....
- *Evaluating* -- judging credibility and validity of evidence, lines of reasoning, conclusions and arguments

## 3. Problem solving (mc)

- Problem solving in everyday contexts (that vary in complexity)

- *Analysing, interpreting and evaluating* information for problem identification and decision making
- *Translating and reorganising* information in progressing toward solution
- *Applying* basic quantitative reasoning and numeracy skills to a problem

## 4. Interpersonal Understandings

- Showing insight into the feelings, motivation and behaviour of others, and into issues related to helping or working with others
- Recognising how such insight may be applied to help or work with others (effective feedback, listening, negotiation, teamwork and leadership)

# Challenges

- Conceptual esp interpersonal (influence of values)
- Technical -- ensuring discrimination between the components

# How are results reported?

- individual student reports
- scale, described levels of achievement

# What do we know...so far?

Voluntary participation

2 sittings (exit 2000, entry 2001)

3665 students from 28 universities (wide range of study fields)

- good internal reliability
- good discrimination between components

# Possible uses

- indicator of generic skills at entry and exit level
- diagnostic information at entry level
- additional criterion for entry into post-graduate courses
- employer information

# The future

- Technical refinements (ongoing validity study)
- Possible modifications
  - additional skills
  - emphasis on some aspects for particular areas of study (eg humanities)
  - additional specific interest items for particular courses
  - computer delivery of the test.