Students' Understanding of Assessment Tasks

As part of a project exploring differential attainment, the University Derby, the University of West London, and Southampton Solent University developed this activity to help students understand the requirements of assessment tasks. There is often a 'discourse gap' in the communication of assessment, where instructions from lecturers can be difficult for students to interpret, or may be interpreted in different ways to the intended meaning. Ensuring that all students understanding the requirements of assessment tasks is an important inclusive assessment practice (see also DHE Focus #2: Communicating Assessment Requirements).

Purpose:

To support students to raise their coursework and module grades by deconstructing assignments using group work.

How:

Ensure that all students fully understand the assignment, facilitated by small and then whole group discussions.

In the session where you introduce the assignment, allow 20 minutes or so for the students to explore the assessment criteria/assignment brief in order to provide the "big picture" of the module.

Steps:

1. Display and outline the assessment/assignment criteria demonstrating how it relates to the learning outcomes and assessment strategy as given in the module handbook.
2. Ask the students, in twos or threes, to highlight/explain/explore key terminology and check their understanding.
3. Then ask groups to join together to explore common themes and identify resources to help with the assignment. *This will need to be managed according to how many students there are in the classroom.*
4. Each group then shares up to three ideas, questions or issues regarding the assignment/assessment **with the whole class**.
5. You can then clarify any matters raised and identify further resources to help students with the assignment, according to the feedback.

You can draw on this information/feedback from your students about the assignments when you are evaluating and developing modules.