Professional Discussion

Good Practice Guidance

Professional Discussion is an assessment methodology which is often used in work-based assessment.

This methodology is supported by the College of Policing to assess any evidence the police officer is struggling to achieve in their everyday work for the Assessment and Recognition of Competence (ARC).

Although awarding organisations recognise the technique they rarely, if ever, validate it as a principle assessment method, it is used to check understanding so the person who is assessing can triangulate the assessment. The College of Policing is following this good practice guidance.

It is useful during a discussion if the police officer can illustrate what they are saying with additional evidence, reports, plans, etc.

None of the awarding organisations will allow professional discussion to be the sole assessment methodology for full qualifications/events. Again, the College of Policing is following this guidance. A professional discussion in isolation will not meet the requirements of ARC.

When using this technique it should be remembered that the discussion becomes the evidence and it is how the discussion is managed, recorded and annotated that will make it strong and relevant.

A professional discussion is not a 'quick chat' but a planned event which is recorded. The recording can use a variety of recording techniques including video and Skype. Telephone calls have the problem of being one sided unless recorded through a speaker phone. There isn't a need to transcribe recordings

but time counters will allow the Quality Assurance team to pinpoint material during the verification period.

The biggest challenge for the person who is assessing the candidate is not to lead the candidate and care must be taken that this doesn't happen. If language skills or ability is the challenge then a professional discussion is not the answer and a different assessment methodology needs to be found.

Professional discussions need time and practice. There are a number of examples on YouTube to illustrate a professional discussion with both good and poor practice.

Poor example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FU1F0r1Y3hs

Good example https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvr5Si2jdAg

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