

# Assessment Moderation Guidelines

## Section 1 - What is moderation, and why these Guidelines?

(1) The University's [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures](#) state “The Unit Assessor will develop, implement and articulate a consistent moderation process for each task, at all locations and partner collaborations, in line with the Assessment Moderation Guidelines.”

(2) Moderation of assessment helps establish comparability of standards of student performance across, for example, different markers, locations, subjects, providers and/or courses of study ([TEQSA – Glossary of Terms](#)). However, moderation is only one part of a broader approach to assure standards in a subject area (Sadler 2012, Gillis 2020).

### Improving our moderation processes by using academic calibration

(3) Good moderation is based on a framework of academic calibration. Calibration is a process of peer review carried out by members of a disciplinary and/or professional community who typically discuss, review and compare student work in order to reach a shared understanding of the academic standard which such work needs to meet.

(4) Research advises enhancing, refining and supporting the academic rigour of our quality assurance by using academic calibration conversations to achieve comparability of standards (Sadler 2012).

(5) Calibration also helps establish that learning tasks used are valid preparation for key learning outcomes in a subject or discipline (Sefcik et al., 2017). Additionally, regular academic calibration conversations build staff capacity.

### Moderation at Southern Cross University

(6) For best practice moderation, the Unit Assessor should develop, implement and facilitate an ongoing calibration process for all academic staff involved in teaching and marking the Unit, including those from all locations and partner collaborations.

(7) In essence, calibration involves effective communication through academic conversations. The aim of the process is to support and lead academics to be confident in:

- a. their own, and their colleagues', informed and calibrated judgments regarding students' progress towards achieving learning outcomes; and
- b. their own, and their colleagues', ability to make transparent and qualitatively assured appraisals of student work.

### Practical considerations

(8) Due to the diversity of our staff locations and time zones, calibration conversations need to allow for asynchronous collaborative interaction, for example via Teams or email, as well as synchronous conversations, for example via Teams or Zoom.

(9) These calibration processes do not necessarily entail separate face-to-face meetings, but can be incorporated into

grade quality assurance processes or other academic conversations.

## **Part A - Before Term starts: initial calibration conversations about teaching and assessment alignment**

(10) Who: facilitated by the Unit Assessor and involving all academic staff involved in the Unit.

(11) When: ideally prior to start of teaching and no later than the first week of the teaching period.

(12) The calibration aspect of this stage of moderation aims to:

- a. reach a shared understanding of evidence of minimum achievement standards of Unit Learning Outcomes;
- b. agree upon the meaning and significance of levels of evidence of achievement of assessment Learning Outcomes (LOs) as per the assignment instructions;
- c. agree on interpretation of assessment marking [rubric](#) field descriptors; and
- d. outline 'best practice' strategies to guide students towards achievement of ULOs and assessment LOs in class.

(13) Good practice: the Unit Assessor works towards co-creation and peer review of Class teaching activities with the teaching team. This is to ensure that such activities support student achievement of learning outcomes, as reflected in the marking rubric for that assessment.

## **Part B - During Term: ongoing calibration conversations to enhance assessment readiness and consistency of marking.**

(14) Who: facilitated by the Unit Assessor and involving all academic staff involved in marking in the Unit.

(15) When: the frequency with which these conversations are conducted depends on the experience of the teaching team and the degree of calibrated judgement extant among the team. If necessary, follow-up conversations are held just before each assessment due date.

(16) Good practice: the Unit Assessor disseminates a selection of assignments submitted in either a previous iteration of the unit, or submitted in this iteration, for co-marking and moderation. Calibration conversations can focus on the spread of marks and those that are borderline between two grades.

(17) The calibration aspect of this (these) academic conversation(s) aims to:

- a. explore whether the students have been adequately prepared to succeed with the upcoming assessment;
- b. share and discuss previous exemplars of student work if available;
- c. agree on interpretation of assessment marking [rubric](#) field descriptors;
- d. co-create Quickmarks and a template for summary feedback, establishing consistency in the volume, tone and format of feedback to be provided.

(18) Good practice: co-create and peer review further class teaching activities to prepare students for next assessment

(19) During assessment marking, the Unit Assessor will monitor grade allocation and quality of feedback through the Grade Centre and, if available, compare data on grading distribution of previous student cohorts for the same assessment task.

## **Part C - After Term: monitor grade allocation and quality of feedback through the Grade Centre**

(20) Who: Unit Assessor

(21) When: immediately following submission and marking of final assessment.

(22) If available, compare data on grading distribution of previous student cohorts for the same assessment task.

(23) If anomalies in grade distribution appear, the Unit Assessor is advised to review previous iterations of Unit assessment for comparison; and engage in peer consultation. A theoretical example: Unexpectedly difficult test questions which result in a consistently and comparatively high fail rate across the cohort.

### **Sole teaching scenario**

(24) Should the Unit have only a single academic staff member involved as both Unit Assessor, facilitator and marker, then peer review by an academic colleague, and consultation with the Discipline Chair are required.

### **References**

Gillis, S. (2020): Ensuring comparability of qualifications through moderation: implications for Australia's VET sector, *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, DOI: 10.1080/13636820.2020.1860116

Sadler, R. (2012). "Assuring academic achievement standards: from moderation to calibration", *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* 20 (1): 5-19. DOI: 10.1080/0969594X.2012.714742

Sefcik, L., Bedford, S., Czech, P., Smith, J., and Yorke, J. (2017) Embedding external referencing of standards into higher education: collaborative relationships are the key. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2017.1278584

## Status and Details

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