Moderation Resource

A support resource for effective moderation of assessment practices and documentation

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This document supports the Higher Education Assessment Policy (LT1302) and Higher Education Assessment Procedure (LT1254) with focus on moderation of assessment practices and documentation. This document is based on collaborative works led by a working party under the auspices of the Federation University Learning & Teaching Committee in the period March to June 2019. The Resource is designed to support Schools and partner providers in carrying out effective and efficient moderation of assessment.
1. Purpose

The Moderation Resource expands and contextualizes options regarding preparation, implementation and review of moderation of assessment. According to Bloxham, Hughes and Adie (2016, p. 642), this includes a focus on the following:

- Ensuring consistency and fairness in educational standards (equity)
- Creating confidence for academics in grading decisions (justification)
- Aligning with systemic requirements (accountability)
- Calibrating judgements and building shared interpretations of criteria and standards (community building)

1.1 Scope

The Moderation Resource is relevant to Federation University undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered through modes including on campus, online and via partnership arrangements but does not apply to higher degree by research courses subject to Regulation 5.1 Higher Doctorates, The Degree of Philosophy, Professional Doctorates and Masters Degrees by Research. It does not apply to courses delivered by FedUni TAFE.

1.2 Context

The Moderation Resource provides a check on the constructive alignment of student learning and assessment within a moderation cycle (see below). Specified processes ensure confidence in the validity and consistency of student assessment across courses and within disciplines. Implicit outcomes provide for quality assurance of course content underpinned by student adoption of effective and discipline relevant learning strategies.

1.3 Definitions

A comprehensive list of definitions associated with moderation of assessment can be located within the Higher Education Assessment Policy (LT1302)

2. Moderation Responsibilities and Process

2.0.1 School responsibilities

The Dean of School or nominee is responsible for:

i. Determining timing of the moderation cycle and included course deliveries

A moderation cycle encompasses course deliveries for one or more pre-determined study periods (e.g., all courses delivered for semester one). All course deliveries each year must fall within a moderation cycle. Determinations on timing and length of a specified moderation cycle, and included course deliveries, will account for practicalities and efficiencies.

ii. Appointing course coordinators, course grading panels and course moderators for each moderation cycle

The School appoints a course coordinator, course grading panel and course moderator for each course falling within a given moderation cycle. Courses may have multiple delivery modes and locations. The course moderator will not be the course coordinator nor will they be a member of the course grading panel. The course coordinator must be a member of the course grading panel and may be the only member of the course grading panel.
panel. Course moderators may have direct teaching or other roles associated with course delivery but must not be involved in assessment or grading for that course. Required expertise and experience for appointed roles remain at the School’s discretion.

iii. Inducting and training course moderators

Course moderators are supported in carrying out their role through an induction process that familiarises them with the School’s approach to assessment. They must be aware of the Higher Education Assessment Policy (LT1302) and the Higher Education Assessment Procedure (LT1954). Some CLIPP professional development opportunities on assessment practices may be relevant to course moderators.

iv. Maintaining records for the moderation cycle

The School maintains central records of the moderation cycle, timing, included courses, course coordinators, course moderators and moderation outcomes. Course coordinators and Schools maintain a full record of moderation cycle application in the Course coordinator’s report—provided for all courses – and in School records. As the Dean’s nominee, Associate Deans Teaching Quality in each school produce an annual moderation report that compiles moderation reports for all courses in the moderation cycles of an academic year.

2.1 Stage One: Moderation of Assessment – Preparation (MAP)

Stage one is completed prior to course delivery (i.e., teaching commencement). This stage provides checks on and support for the course learning design and preparation of assessment tasks aligned with effective education practice. Criteria applied will vary according to factors including the nature of the assessment tasks, associated courses, and delivery locations.

2.1.1 Course coordinator responsibilities

The course coordinator specifies and documents a course delivery plan (e.g., course description) incorporating assessment items consistent with the approved Course Outline, University polices and good teaching practice. In completing this task, the course coordinator must ensure:

- The assessment tasks are valid and achievable in measuring specified learning outcomes in an equitable manner for all students in the course, accounting for access and diversity
- Criteria for assessment grading, including, where applicable, mark/grade allocations, marking guides, rubrics, forms of feedback and so on, are available to all teaching staff and students on or before course start date
- The assessment tasks incorporate student opportunity for suitable preparatory learning and direction, which may include learning activities or examples
- Students have opportunity for clarification on requirements plus sufficient time for completion of assessment
- Specified assessment tasks have been updated, revised or changed since the previous moderation cycle

The course coordinator records the moderation process which has occurred in fdlGrades under General Comments in the course coordinator’s report.
2.1.2 Moderator responsibilities
The moderator is responsible for reviewing independently any planned course delivery within the moderation cycle. The moderator provides constructive feedback to the course coordinator on the course learning plan and assessment.

- The moderator reviews and documents feedback on course delivery plan and assessment consistent with the above-specified course coordinator responsibilities.
- Feedback and matters of concern are discussed with the course coordinator and teaching team.
- The course coordinator documents a response to feedback including adjustments to the course delivery plan or assessment; advice as required may be sought from the Associated Dean Teaching Quality.

2.1.3 Teaching team responsibilities
The teaching team includes all lecturers, tutors, demonstrators, assessors and markers involved in the delivery of a course. Teaching teams may be large and located in disparate university and partner venues. It is important that all members of the teaching team approach assessment in a consistent manner.

- Scrutinise assessment tasks and associated documents to become familiar with expectations of students.
- Communicate with the course coordinator or course grading panel member to discuss any matters of concern, clarify procedures surrounding reporting, record keeping, marking and feedback expectations.

2.2 Stage Two: Moderation of Assessment – Implementation (MAI)

2.2.1 Teaching team responsibilities
- Report to the course coordinator or course grading panel member any variations to the conditions under which assessment tasks were completed.
- If applicable, mark selected assessment tasks for discussion with colleagues to assist in developing consistent responses/grades.
- Assess student work and enter marks into fdlGrades.

2.2.2 Course coordinator responsibilities
The course coordinator implements course delivery for all locations specified in the moderation cycle. Tasks and activities are recorded and stored in the University approved records management system. In this process the course coordinator:

- Provides access to the course delivery plan and assessment for the course teaching team including partners.
- Provides opportunity for correspondence and discussion on the course with the teaching team.
- Gives advice on strategies and processes to ensure academic integrity including use of electronic detection for plagiarism and invigilated examinations.
- Advises on expectations around student support and direction for students with special circumstances under policy.
Course grading panels are responsible for ensuring consistency and fairness between all assessors/markers in the teaching team. Options for marking/grading review may include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Assurance of learning using the selected criteria specified in the marking scheme or rubric
- Single markers among locations or for parts within assessment
- Marking assessment samples followed by course-coordinator-led discussions
- Second marking of all assessment tasks with fail grades
- Statistical analysis of mark distributions testing for sample differences
- Simultaneous markers for time-current assessment tasks (e.g., presentations)
- Video recording of time-current assessment tasks (e.g., performances, practicals) to allow for checking of marks awarded
- Third markers arbitrating unresolved disputes on discrepancies or for major student projects (e.g., capstone courses)
- Remarking a sample of submissions (e.g., 10% of assessment tasks items for each location). For partner providers, sample sizes are defined in the partner provider manual.

All decisions for appropriate marking/grading review involving partner providers must comply with processes defined in the partner provider manual in order to ensure compliance with auditing and contractual obligations.

Mark/grade discrepancies are identified by the course coordinator as a result of the course grading panel’s marking/grading review process. The course coordinator determines suitable and timely corrective action. Action taken and rationale is communicated to the teaching team and documented.

- Liaise directly with the teaching team with regards to moderation feedback, outcomes and questions and resolve disagreements between markers where necessary
- Seek advice about corrective action, as appropriate from the ADTQ or Program Coordinator. In the event of dispute, the Dean of School has ultimate authority in assessment matters
- Apply corrective action on the basis of moderation results and update fdlGrades accordingly

On course completion, the course coordinator records outcomes of the moderation of assessment – implementation in the General Comments section of the course coordinator’s report, including a summary of course results for all delivery modes and locations. This report is to be maintained by the School and may be used for ratification or upward reporting as required under policy.

2.3 Stage Three: Moderation of Assessment – Review (MAR)

Moderation of assessment – review (MAR) accords with the Higher Education Assessment Procedure (LT1254). The purpose of this stage is to confirm that MAI was conducted properly and to make changes to future assessments as part of continuous improvement. Course coordinators will determine a process for review according to School guidelines.
2.3.1 Moderator responsibilities

- Provide open and honest feedback regarding the marking/grading and feedback to students for set assessment tasks compared using criterion referencing techniques.
- Review guidance on assessment tasks provided to students and make recommendations for changes to the design of assessment tasks.
- Communicate efficiently and effectively regarding the outcome of the moderation process with the course coordinator within 5-10 working days.

2.3.2 Course Coordinator responsibilities

- Document the number of assessment tasks that were moderated for each location of the course.
- Consider the moderator’s recommendations and record changes to assessment to be made for the next offering of the course.
- Report the outcomes of moderation of assessment – review for inclusion in the School’s annual moderation report.

3. References