
Tip sheet – Moderating assessment design

Moderation of assessment forms part of the [Assessment Practice Procedures](#) (4. Moderation). As discussed in the [good practice guide \(GPG\) on moderation](#), it involves asking colleagues and/or students to have a second look or be a sounding board with respect to various aspects of assessment. Such assessment aspects are: the actual assessment items, instructions, marking guides, [rubrics](#), marking, grading and [feedback](#). [The purpose of such a second look moderation is to](#) ensure appropriateness, comprehensibility, consistency, fairness and/or transparency.

Developing credible assessments which can reliably and consistently judge students is complex. It can also be contentious for two reasons, it can rely too much on individual professional judgement and therefore suffer from blind spots and that assessment can often have long-term, high-stakes consequences for students. Moderation provides a way of addressing these concerns and helps ensure assessments are robust in their design. As having aspects of the assessment reviewed will reduce misunderstandings, discontent and confusion for students and staff when undertaking assessments. This Tip sheet focuses on moderating assessment design while the other tip sheet linked to moderation provides advice on [moderating grading and feedback](#). Ideally, both tip sheets and the GPG will be used as a package as assessments are moderated through the various stages of design to recording student grades.

Things to consider prior to moderation

While designing assessments ask yourself the following:

- if the assessment has been used previously have you addressed any issues which occurred last time?
- if it is a new approach to an assessment have you spoken to any students to ensure all the components will make sense to them, it is not over complicated and can be completed in an appropriate time frame (completing the assessment yourself may not help with timing because (depending on the assessment type) you most likely know the answers and where to find them)?
- is the assessment aligned with the learning outcomes for the topic or course?
- is the assessment valid and reliable?

Adhering to policy

The [Assessment Practice Procedures](#) (4. Moderation) identifies the Topic Coordinator as responsible for ensuring “assessment designs and information, including grading rubrics, are quality assured through discussion with at least one colleague experienced in assessment”. If there is more than one staff member involved in the assessment processes (including grading) they are also required to “meet with the teaching team before the commencement of the topic to discuss assessment requirements”.

Identifying a moderator and what they look for

Where the Topic Coordinator is the sole person teaching into a topic they need to identify a colleague with assessment experience and ideally some subject knowledge to review their assessments. Moderators need to be given access to topic materials and assessments plus any feedback from students and/or others who have taught the topic as they need to ensure the assessment items, instructions, rubrics and marking sheets are appropriate to context, comprehensible, consistent, fair and/or transparent. The following table indicates relevant assessment design elements and some points to consider when moderating them.

Aspect of Assessment	Moderation elements
Assessment item (see Tip sheet on Authentic assessment for various assessment examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessments are suitable to allow students to indicate achievement of learning outcomes (constructive alignment), are at appropriate learning (AQF) level and fit with what was included as part of knowledge and skills taught within the topic - The weighting of pieces is appropriate and corresponds to the importance of the relevant learning outcomes. the weighting is such that students are not over or under assessed - There is sufficient variety of assessments (for instance to allow sufficiently for the development of complex skills such as self-reflection, leadership, critical analysis, problem solving, etc.) - The number of assessments is kept to a minimum to meet the recommendations for variety of assessment types and sufficient number of assessments to cover the topic content and avoid redundancy through duplicated assessments. - Assessments are authentic for area of learning/ potential field of employment - The assessment design is flexible, fair and equitable. - Relevant feedback and comments from staff and students are sufficiently addressed
Instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructions are clearly described, use inclusive language and include reference to resources students may require (such as the Student Learning Support Services, Library, text books, lab materials, technology, etc. as appropriate)
Rubric or marking guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A rubric with clearly articulated criteria, standards and expectations is provided. - All markers are clear about the requirements and expectations and agree that they are transparent. - Sufficient discussion of the rubrics or marking guides with students before assessment attempted for member checking or benchmarking
Use of technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where a student is required to access technology to complete a particular assessment the technology is fit for purpose, accessible, safe and easy to use so no student is disadvantaged by its use
Benchmarking assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider all topics undertaken by students across the program and/or equivalent topics run at other institutions to ensure assessments are at a similar level, provide variety in skill and knowledge development, are appropriately scaffolded, are not all due at the same time - Within a topic, assessments are equivalent or comparable regardless of the physical location of the topic or the learning platform used to deliver it - Where a teaching team is involved in delivery, individual teachers and/or markers take a similar approach to the assessments

Marking meeting

When a marking meeting is held it should involve the moderator and all staff engaged in delivering and marking the topic. All those involved should meet (as practical) to discuss the assessment and approaches to marking before the topic commences. Ideally a second meeting should occur before students are

provided with responses to their assessment (see [Tip sheet – Moderating grading and feedback](#) for further information about this meeting)

The first meeting could be where the moderation occurs, if not, it should ensure:

- the assessments reflect good assessment practice and where feasible are based on good evidence (this could include feedback from the previous years' assessments and/or comparisons with similar topics held across other institutions)
- the assessments are clear to the teaching team
- the assessments cover all relevant and appropriate aspects of the topic
- all markers understand and agree with the standards and criteria outlined in the rubric or marking guide

References

- Australian Catholic University. (2020). *Consensus Moderation*. Retrieved from https://staff.acu.edu.au/-/media/staff-site-rte-docs-only/learning-and-teaching/documents/consensus_moderation.pdf?la=en&hash=553BE82D1067AAF3EFD9FF49EEC09D9A
- Bloxham, S., Hughes, C., & Adie, L. (2016). What's the point of moderation? A discussion of the purposes achieved through contemporary moderation practices. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(4), 638-653. doi:10.1080/02602938.2015.1039932
- Tasmanian Institute of Learning and Teaching. (2019). *Guidelines for good assessment practice*. Retrieved from https://www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1225433/Guidelines-for-Good-Assessment_Fourth-Edition.pdf